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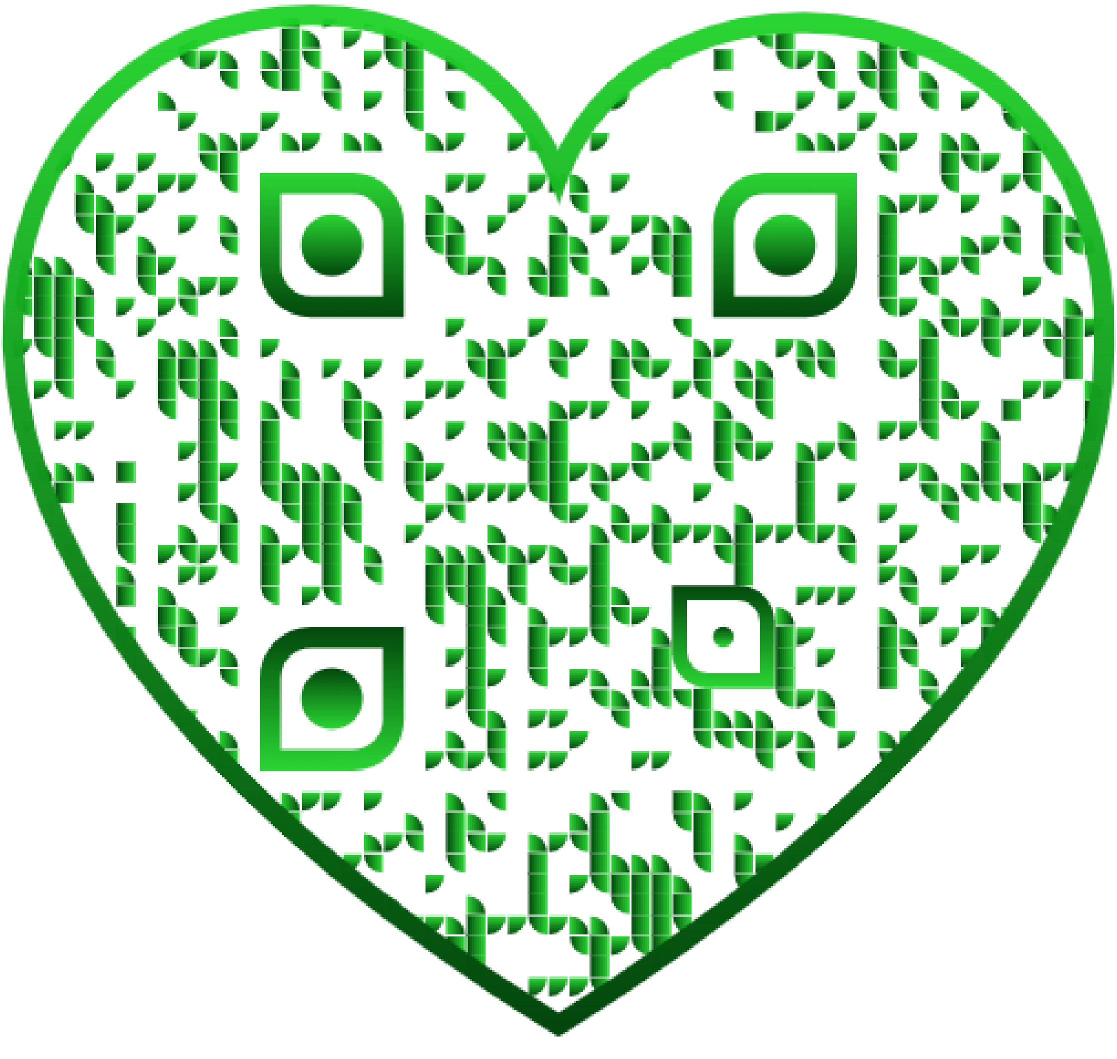

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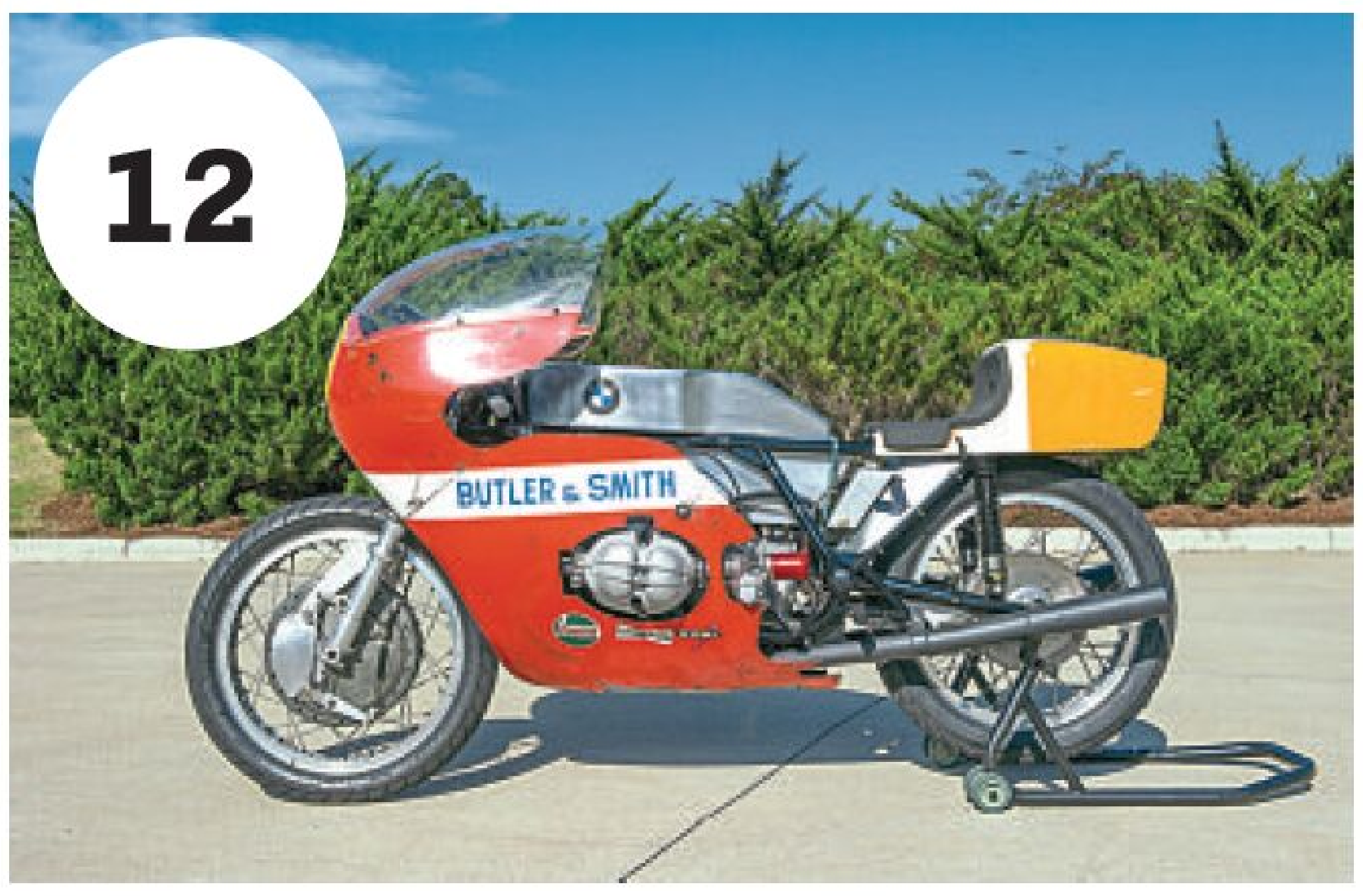
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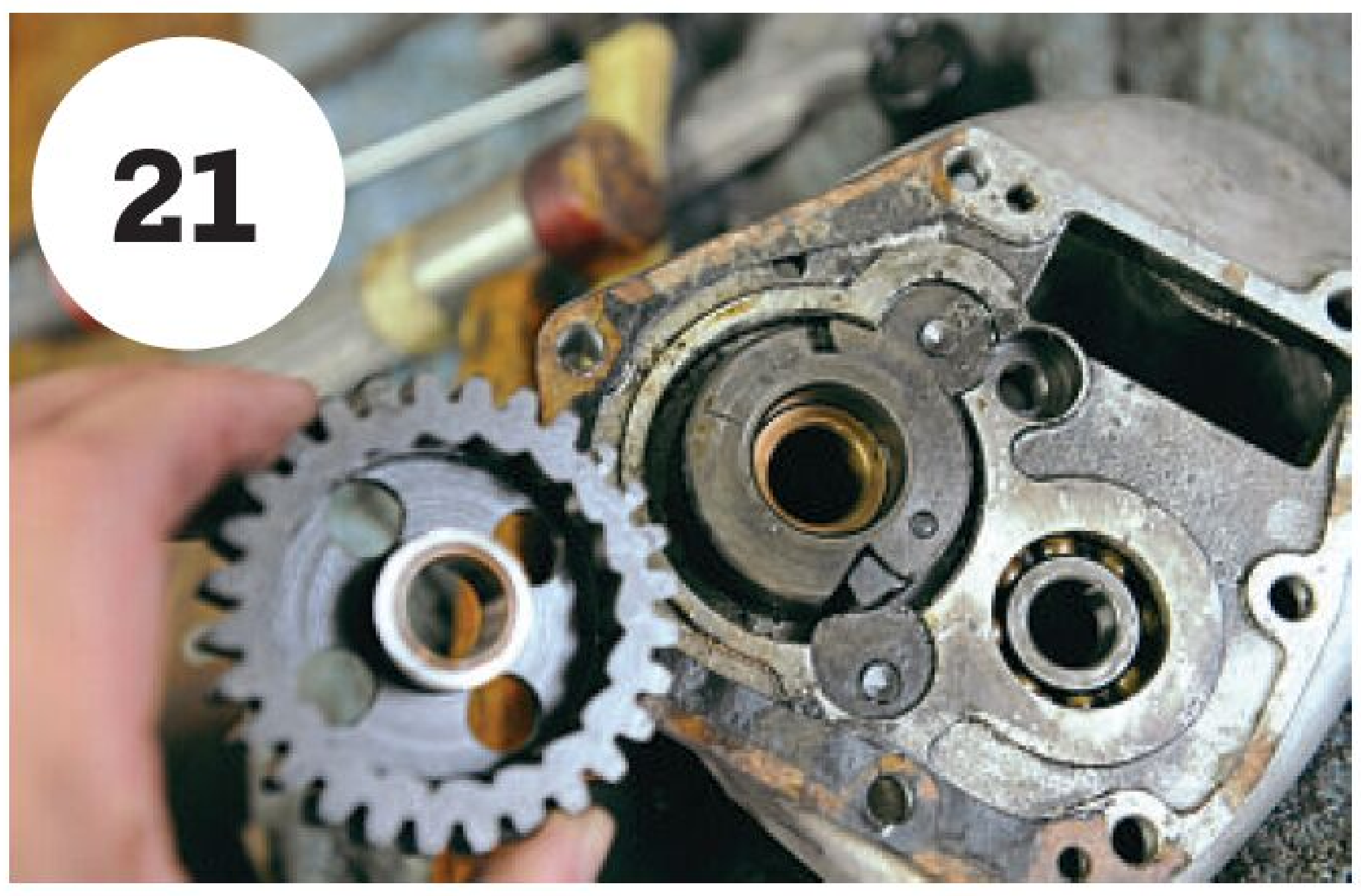

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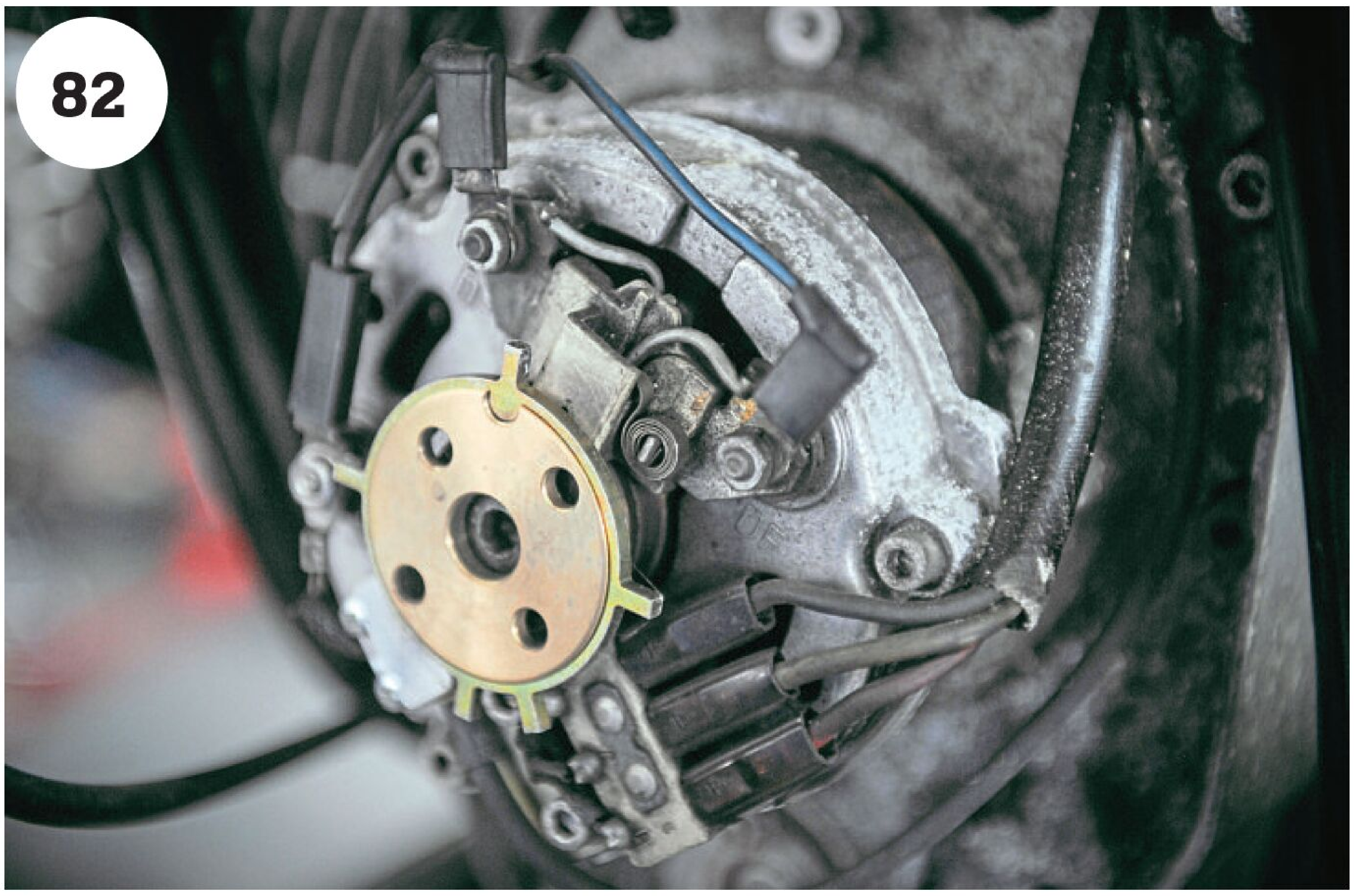

94
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Contents

008 **From the archive**
Trusty BMs to crazy Katana, we look at designer Hans Muth

012 **BMW racer – the last true factory BMW**
Selling bikes needed racing – and BMW used its own factory frame

022 **Next month**
We sit down with TV's Henry Cole and chat bikes

024 **Subscribe**
Get your magazine delivered to your door and save some money too!

026 **News**
All the comings and goings in our world of old bikes

028 **News - new Triumphs**
Hinckley has been busy keeping its Bonneville range on top

030 **Classic Motorcycle Mechanics Staford Show**
We found some crackers this year

034 **Your Guide To: Kawasaki H1 500 Mach III**
Widowmaker or dream-maker? What a machine

044 **What's On**
Plenty of inside jumbles and meets still on, so get out there

045 **Old Bike Mechanics Directory**
Let us list your favourite, trusted old bike garage so they can help others

046 **Your Guide To: MV Agusta 750S vs F4 ORO**
Decades apart, these bikes both lit up the world of motorcycling

056 **Frank Recalls: BSA Starfire 250**
He loves them, even if the rumours are true

064 **When Will I Be Famous: Yamaha TRX 850**
Yamaha liked parallel twins, so tried some Ducati pie

074 **Reader adverts**
There's plenty to tempt you this month, from show winners to projects

082 **How It Works: Dynamos vs alternators**
Need recharging? We tell you what does what and how to keep it right

086 **In The Workshop: Norton gearbox strip-down**
Norton, Matchless and AJS used the AMC gearbox, so we rebuild one

094 **In The Workshop: Rebuilding fuel taps**
New ones are expensive, so we show you how to rebuild your old taps

098 **Frank's Famous Last Words**
The price of 'recalibration' and temptation is on Frank's mind...

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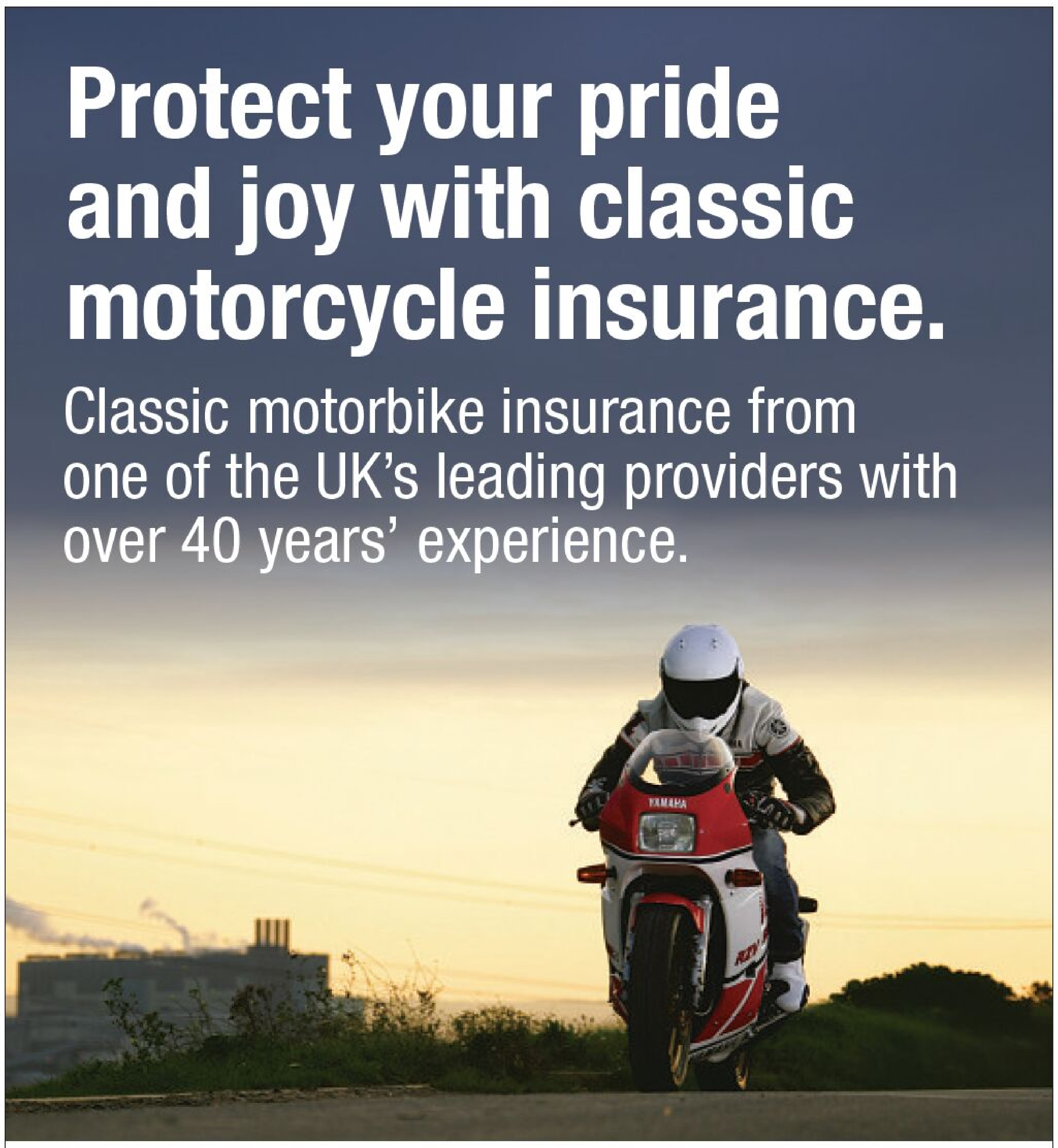

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It's been emotional

GREETINGS, ALL CUSTODIANS OF machines old and older. May your lights be still working and your timing spot-on. Hope you've had a great month riding out, as those nights are drawing in and the temperatures start to fall, and our opportunities become less. But then it's garage time!

When this chapter of motorcycle journalism started for me 18 years ago, the first bike launch I attended was the Ducati 1198 superbike. Green isn't the word for this ex-riding instructor. Turning up to Portimao circuit in sun-kissed Portugal and seeing a row of immaculately prepped red superbikes will be a memory forever, as will having to learn a tricky circuit on said bike, pretty damn quickly. Dozens of chiselled Italian engineers and mechanics watched on as I gingerly head out of pitlane with fast, fellow journos running rings around me… oh, and recently retired champion Troy Bayliss was riding around too, as if there wasn't enough pressure. I was in heaven, and for almost two decades I have continued to be.

By contrast, last week I was invited to Chorley, Lancashire, to ride a new range of Chinese bikes, QJ Motor. The range was very interesting, as this new name to the UK is eager to impress with huge specification and very tempting prices. The bikes stood up really well and that price should help more people into biking, which is great. It was raining, though, and no, Troy Bayliss didn't turn up.

However, 20 years of testing all these wonderful bikes (which ironically, I could never afford) and nowadays all I want to do is rebuild my old Nortons or ride my wonderful BMW. Modern bikes are fantastic, and biking gives us that diverse range to be able to pick the bit you like, or if you fancy a change. And for me, now, it's old machines – they've got under my skin. The AMC gearbox is going back together nicely, the old Model 50 bravely donating the parts I need to finish the ES2 and I'm stockpiling the Commando parts because I am determined to finish all the others before I start it. The BMW brakes are better now they have new discs, and I'm machining some spacers for the front forks which will hopefully improve the front end. And it needs a service. And I love them all for it.

Motorcycling is often held up as a real positive for the mind in these hectic times. A ride out this morning – even for a check-up – allowed me to put some puzzles I'd been struggling with together in my mind. Working on this old gearbox gives me huge satisfaction and they're not tricky 'boxes, but you need it to be right so that focus is crucial. Putting a helmet on, even when you hear the rain beating down, rarely brings dread, or sorrow, or regret. It brings optimism, and for me, even after more than a million miles, it forever brings me freedom. I hope it does to you, too.

All my best,

Matt

Matt Hull
■ **editor@classicbikeguide.com**

‘You can sit in a car. But a motorcycle, you are part of it. It is physical’ – Hans Muth

Hans Muth is a man both classic and modern motorcycling should be more aware of, as he has been one of the few fundamental characters in the shaping of motorcycles as we know it. He helped make bikes look great, as well as performing well.

The German designer worked first for car manufacturers like Ford, then in 1971 found himself working as ‘advanced exterior and pre-programme interior designer’ at BMW. Part of this move from the blue oval was that BMW made motorcycles, and Hans had an MV 750S at the time.

Shortly after, Muth met head of BMW Motorrad development, Hans-Gunter von der Marwitz. In a random conversation, Muth mentioned his enthusiasm and asked who designed their range of bikes. Von der Marwitz, another bike man who had designed the frame all boxer-engined BMWs used from the 1960s to the 1990s (and was a blatant copy of the McCandless-brothers’ Featherbed frame to answer BMWs previous handling issues) replied: “No one in particular – but if you want to, why not have a go?” Following that, Muth balanced his ‘day job’ on cars with moonlighting for the bike division!

Suzuki Katana was styled round Muth’s personal MV 750S, another inline four-cylinder

> ***“The pecking order in most motorcycle companies prior had been engineers at the top, so they inadvertently designed the look of the bikes. Until the 1970s, it was all about engine performance.”***

The pecking order in most motorcycle companies prior had been engineers at the top, so they inadvertently designed the look of the bikes. Until the 1970s, it was all about engine performance, and the mighty Japanese still didn’t understand the importance of handling, let alone styling. Aesthetics just wasn’t thought of too much. Add to this that BMW had an image problem of being boring. Recently hired to the board, Bob Lutz, a straight-talking type who loved bikes, fought the car-minded management for a sportsbike to help. He found many bike enthusiasts around the factory and got the 745cc boxer engine from the R75/5 taken out to 898cc, while Hans Muth balanced the BMW sensible approach with style. Hence on the R90S, there’s a clock and voltmeter in the small handlebar fairing, a stylish (Hans styled the shape around the tank of his own MV), comfortable fuel tank but with a huge 200-mile range, and comfy for two, yet sporty looking seat unit. But his greatest addition was the two-tone, hand painted silver-smoke or (to please the Americans, it was called ‘egg-yolk’ in the factory) orange-over-silver ‘Daytona’ paint schemes. The bike sold out after first being shown, despite its expensive price.

Possibly the most influential motorcycle since the 1938 Speed Twin? The 1980 BMW R80G/S

Hans Muth (left) works with his team over the ‘seat-and-a-half’ that improved the aerodynamics of the R100RS

Muth had a success, and the bike team had shown the suits that a sportsbike could sell, so work began on the R100RS – after all, the rivals were still faster.

Muth has always believed in practicality of design, form from function. But the R90S had a reputation for weaving at high speed as the headlight fairing created lift. So, for the /7 range, the RS sports fairing was designed in the wind-tunnel of design house Pininfarina, with a chin to reduce lift. Muth also brough out his ‘seat and a half’ to

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steady wind flow over the rider – and look great, obviously.

The RT touring fairing followed, with adjustable screen and vents to direct air to the rider and fight the negative pressure behind the huge screen. Ariel and Vincent had failed to make a large fairing work, but BMW managed. The RT continued until 1995.

There were other brave styles, like the smaller-engined R65LS – a bike that shows a large clue to a future design. But Hans' last work for BMW was the gamble that paid off, and some say it saved the company – the R80 G/S. Designing something that really hadn't been tried before, Muth says his inspiration was the Range Rover. That concept is still one of the best-selling bikes to this day.

Hans Muth started his own agency in 1980 and after immersing himself into Japanese culture designed the Katana around his MV 750S for a magazine feature, along with Ferdinand Porsche and Guigiaro. This design got presented to Suzuki, which was lost in the styling stakes. It was called the Katana after a Japanese sword, and Suzuki wanted it for its GS1000 four-cylinder engine. Muth said to Osamu Suzuki: "If you don't treat it right, its sharpness can be lethal. The same is true for a motorcycle." The Katana was the fastest bike to date.

Muth has gone on to design guns, cars, cameras, bike luggage and is still working. With a portfolio of R90S, R80G/S and Katana being so important in the 1970s and 1980s, he has undoubtably had a huge impact on how our bikes are shaped today. CBG

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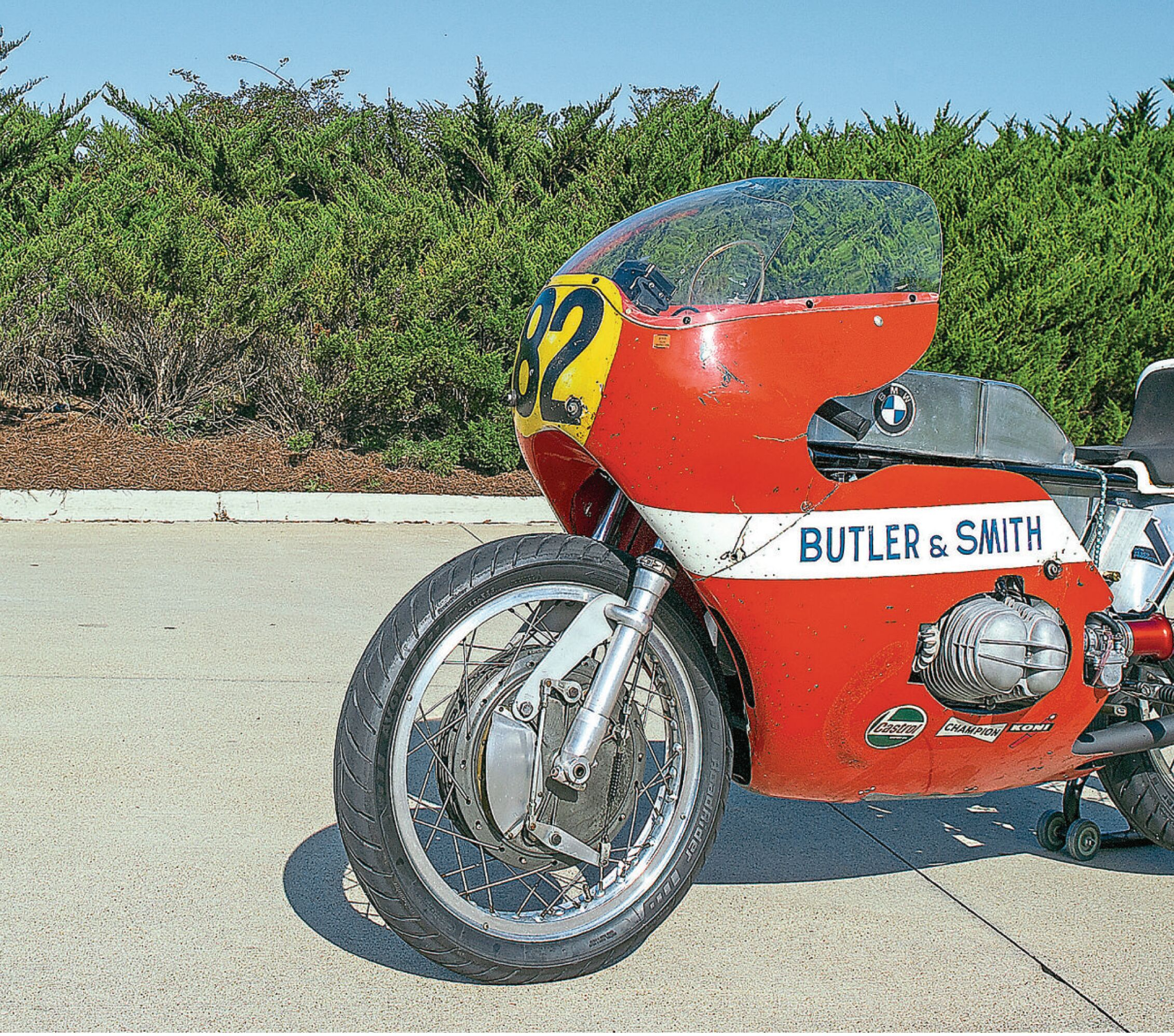
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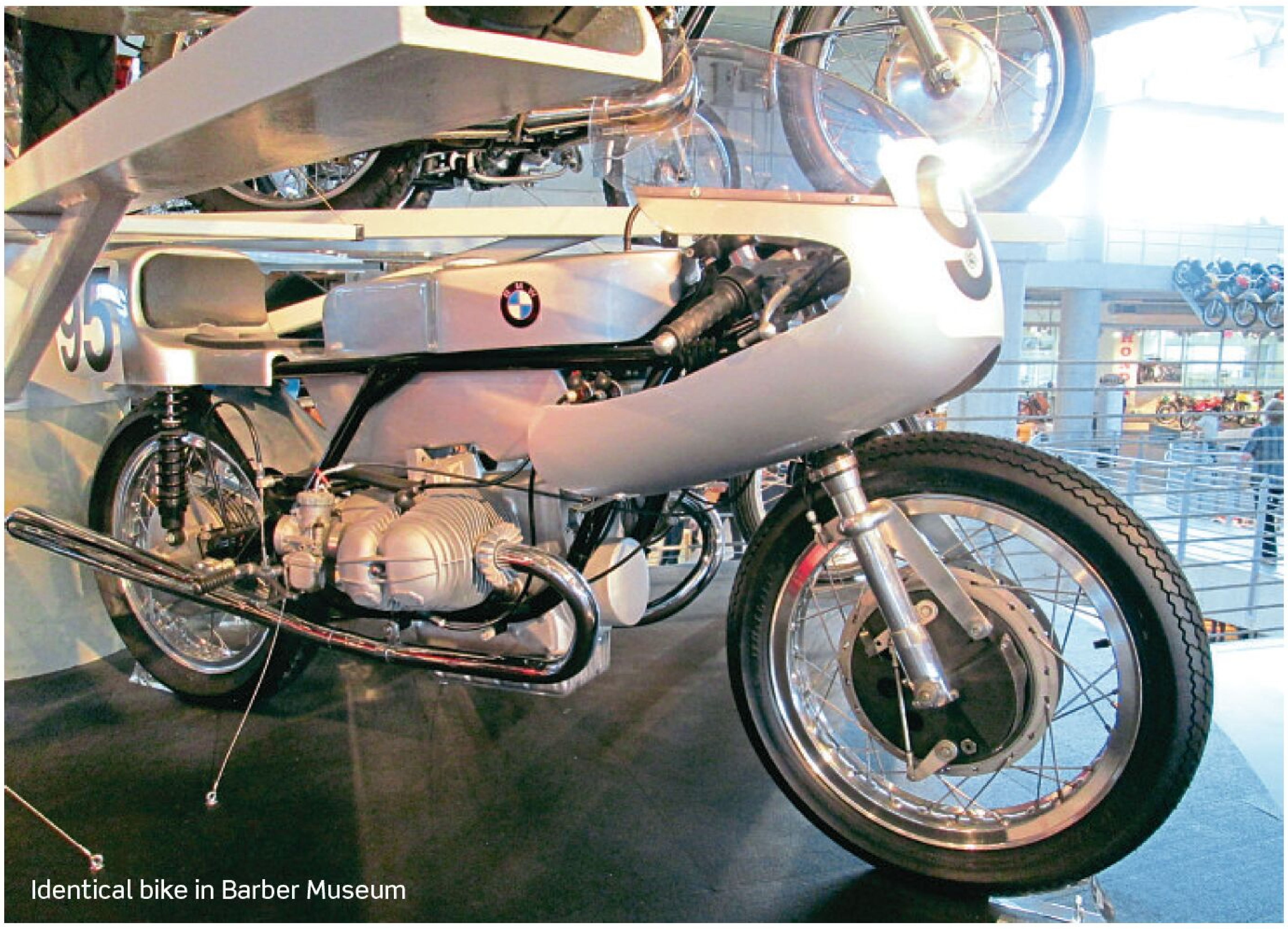
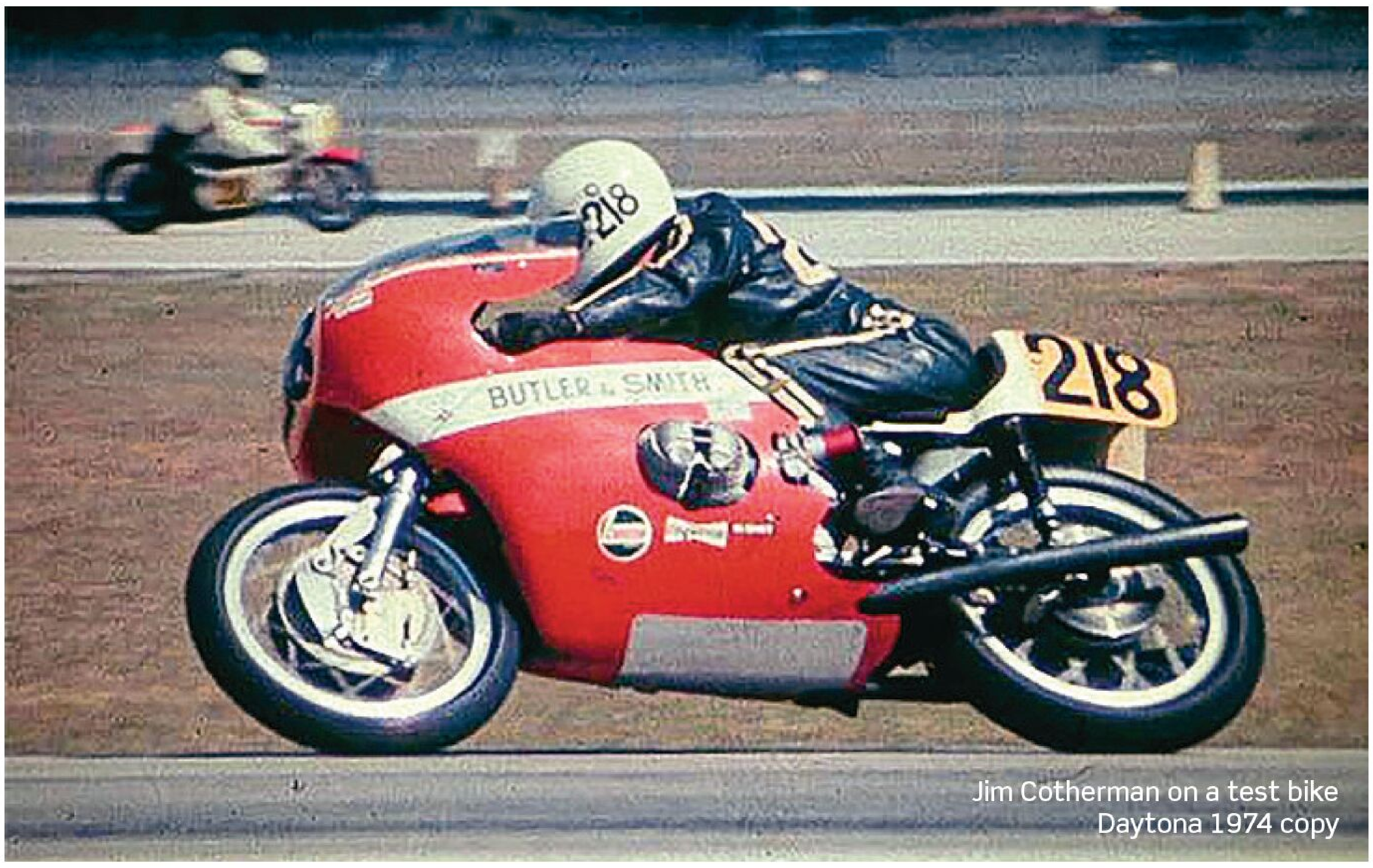
Butler & Smith BMW F750 Boxer Racer Test

The 1970s BMW R90S road bike racing success helped the German company rise in the USA, but there was a rather special factory racer that preceded it – and much was learned...

Words by Alan Cathcart, with **photography by** Phil Hawkins



Identical bike in Barber Museum



Jim Cotherman on a test bike
Daytona 1974 copy

ROAD RACING HISTORY HAS LOTS OF fascinating footnotes, many about bikes which for one reason or another weren't very successful. One of these is the story of the very last motorcycles carrying the BMW badge to go racing using a factory-built race chassis from the German manufacturer's Munich base. No, not the 990cc BMW MotoGP prototype built in Italy by Oral Engineering for the German manufacturer, as tested by Luca Cadalora in 2006, whose engine essentially comprised three cylinders off a BMW Formula 1 car engine, nor the abortive R1 desmo Boxer prototype of 1991 – neither of which actually raced. Instead, this factory footnote tells the tale of a bike created in America with the help of BMW's own engineers, which represented the first steps on a trail that would duly lead to the German marque's domination of the early days of superbike racing in the mid-1970s, with the R90S.

Both then and now, BMW's participation in superbike racing was part of a process of rejuvenating the German company's hitherto somewhat staid image by competing face-to-face with its Japanese and Italian rivals in the world's ultimate proving ground, the race track. So it was that, after the Adams family purchased BMW's US importer, New Jersey-based Butler & Smith, in 1971 and were faced with sluggish sales of its R75/5 Boxer introduced to the USA the previous year as BMW's sportiest bike, company president Dr Peter Adams instituted a five-year race programme aimed at refreshing the 'pipe and slippers' image of the BMW brand. Doing so initially entailed funding its parts manager and part-time racer, German-born former NASA engineer Udo Gietl, with the resources to develop a Formula 750 racer based on the 75/5, especially as the AMA National Championship was to be run for the first time under F750 rules in 1972.

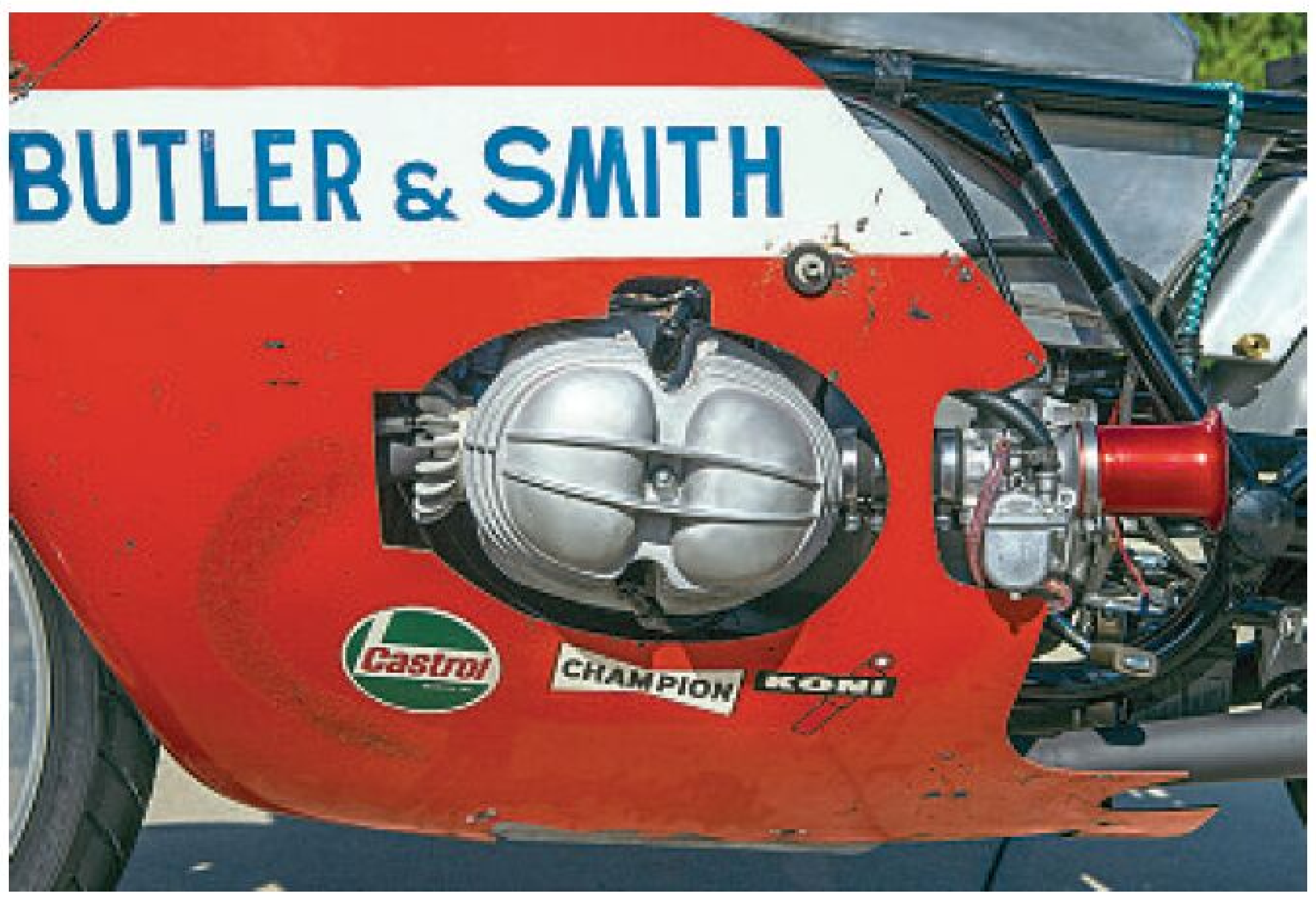
➡

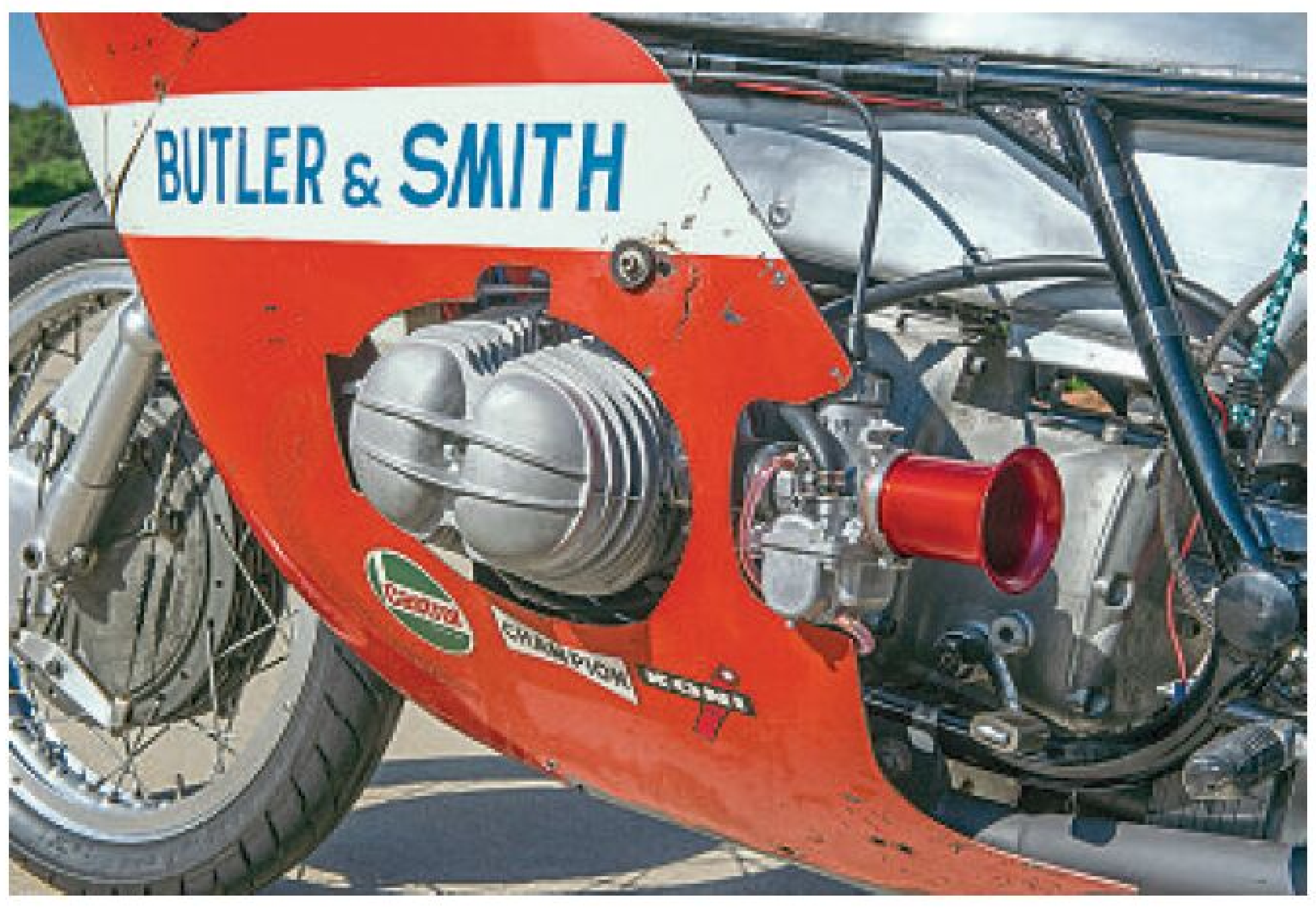
BUTLER & SMITH
82

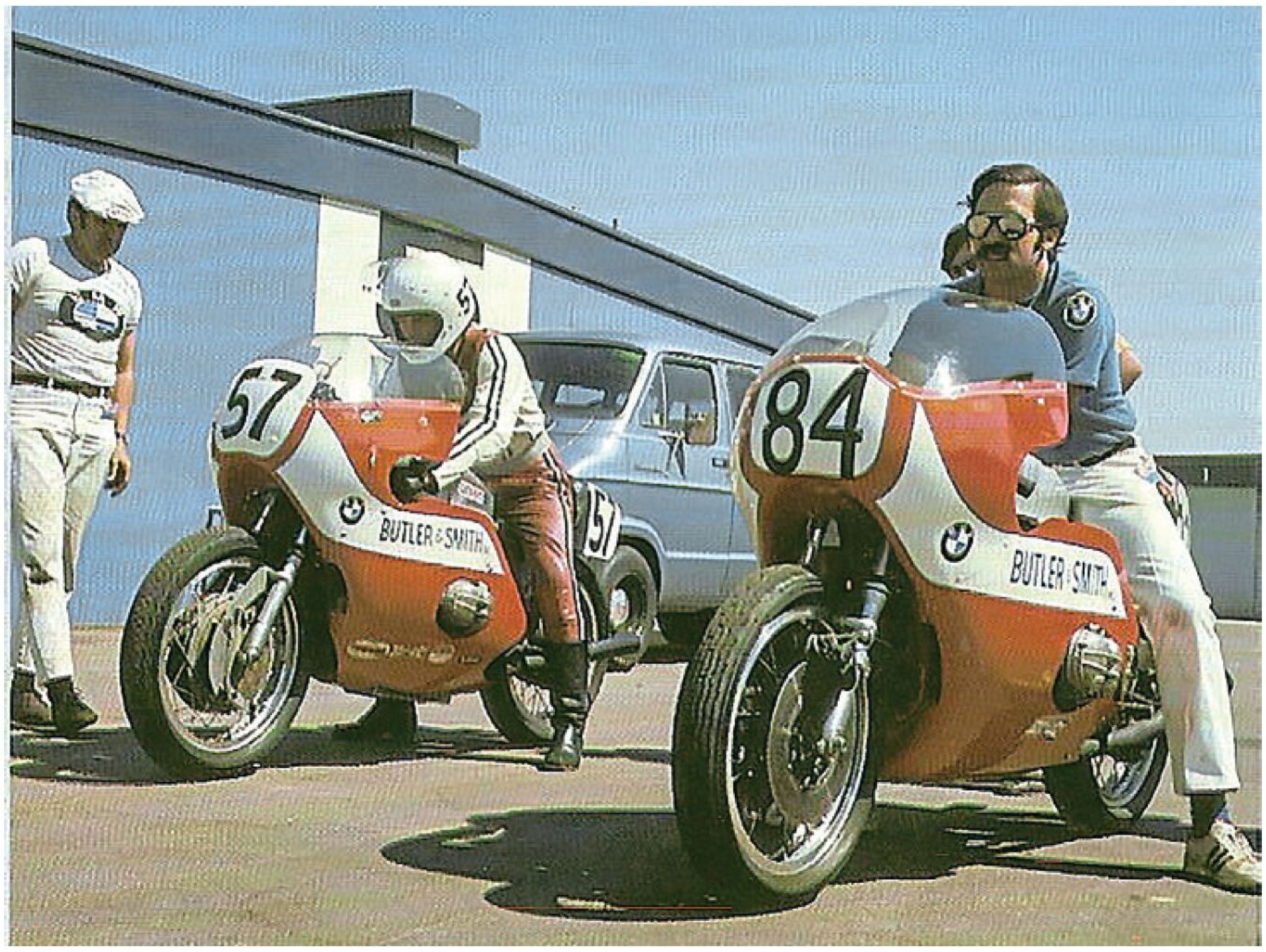
> ***"This was a broad copy of the BMW works frame, but in chrome-moly tubing rather than mild steel, so both stiffer and lighter. But it still didn't fix the problem of the steering head flexing thanks to the increasingly sticky tyres of the day, plus the bike was hard to turn."***

With the help of BMW's American representative, Volker Beer, Gietl obtained four factory-built race chassis identical to those used to construct the three works R75/5-based BMW F750 racers which Helmut Dähne, Dave Potter and Hans-Otto Butenuth rode in April 1972's Imola 200, with Dähne finishing 13th that year, and one place lower on the same bike in 1973. In fact, it was the first of the two bikes which Gietl built up using those frames at Amol Precision, the large BMW dealer at nearby Dumont, NJ, which first saw action even before the factory's Imola racers, when Amol owner Oscar Leibmann's son, Kurt, raced it in the Daytona 100-mile Junior race in March 1972 but failed to finish. Leibmann continued to race the blue and silver bike with reasonable success in events around Eastern USA and Canada, while Gietl built up a second machine for Reg Pridmore to race on the West Coast. This came after Dr Adams had established a separate Butler & Smith Californian operation, enlisting its service manager Helmut Kern to look after Pridmore's bike. It was Kern who concluded that the R75/5 would be more competitive in the production class then rapidly gaining in popularity, which in turn would eventually mutate into superbike, and Pridmore's stunning run of 15 wins and six second places out of 23 West Coast Production series rounds in 1972/73 proved him right.

But back east, Gietl continued to develop the two F750 bikes, and Liebmann and Pridmore entered the 1973 Daytona 200 on the two factory-framed racers, now clad in the same distinctive, all-enveloping Wixom streamlining painted in Butler & Smith's distinctive red and white colours. The fairings had been developed to allow the equally lower-powered OHV Harley-







Kurt Liebmann a Reg Pridmore in Daytona pits, 1973

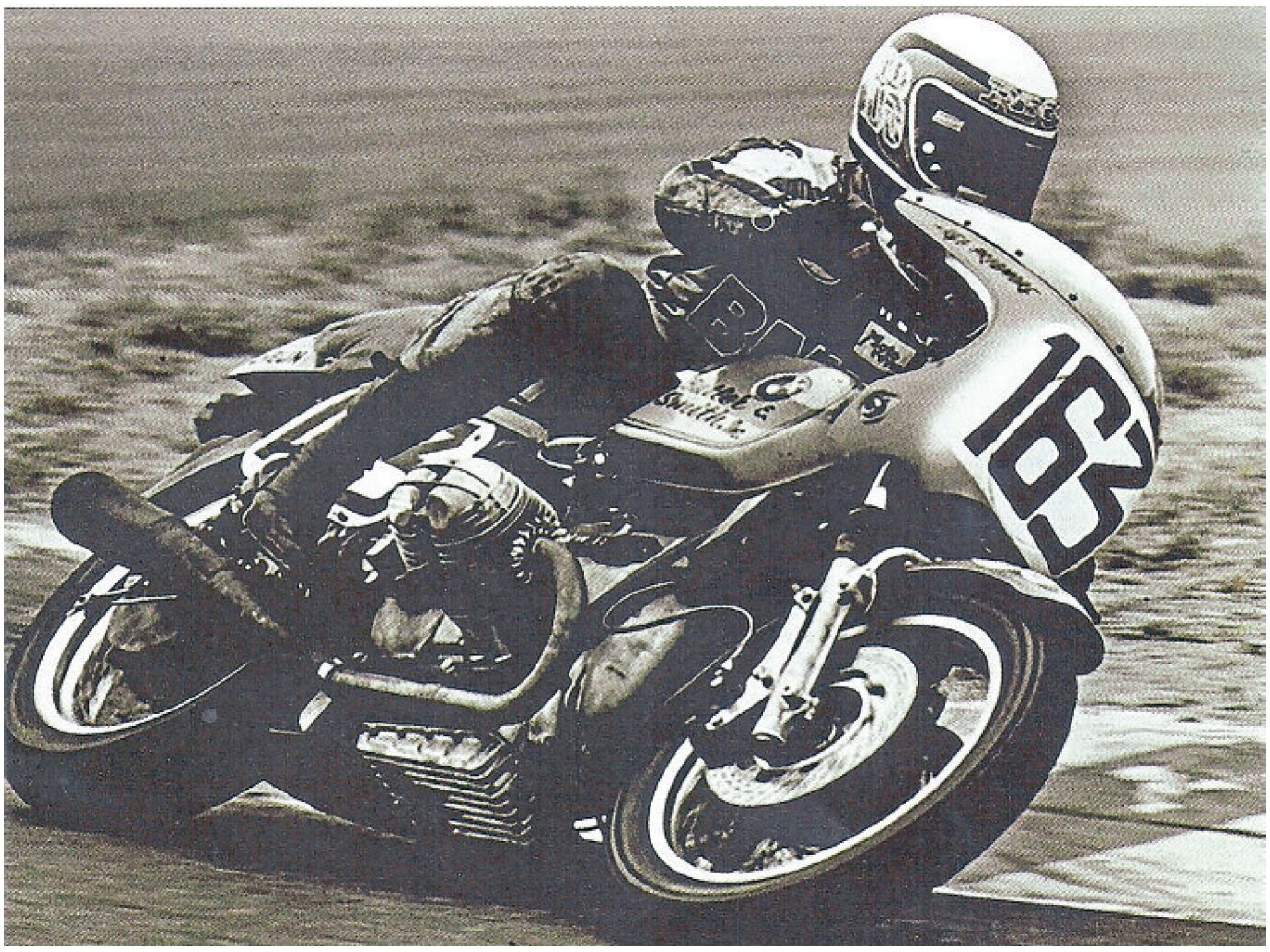
Davidson XR750-TT to keep up with the new generation of fast but fragile Japanese two-strokes. But the pushrod BMWs were still outclassed for speed on the Florida bankings, even though Gietl's astute engine development was delivering the kind of horsepower the factory chassis was unable to handle, with 92bhp at the crank at 9500rpm. As a guide, the later R100 with their 998cc engines made 60bhp in standard form.

So, Gietl jettisoned the second unused pair of BMW factory race chassis and commissioned C&J Racing Frames, a company that already had a good name for building dirt-trackers, to construct its first-ever road-racing chassis for the R75/5 BMW motor. This was a broad copy of the BMW works frame, but in chrome-moly tubing rather than mild steel, so both stiffer and lighter. But it still didn't fix the problem of the steering head flexing thanks to the increasingly sticky tyres of the day, plus the bike was hard to turn. After another wasted season with no decent results, Kern convinced Adams to commission a pair of frames from expat Englishman Rob North, creator of the successful BSA/Triumph-3 triples, who'd recently emigrated to San Diego.

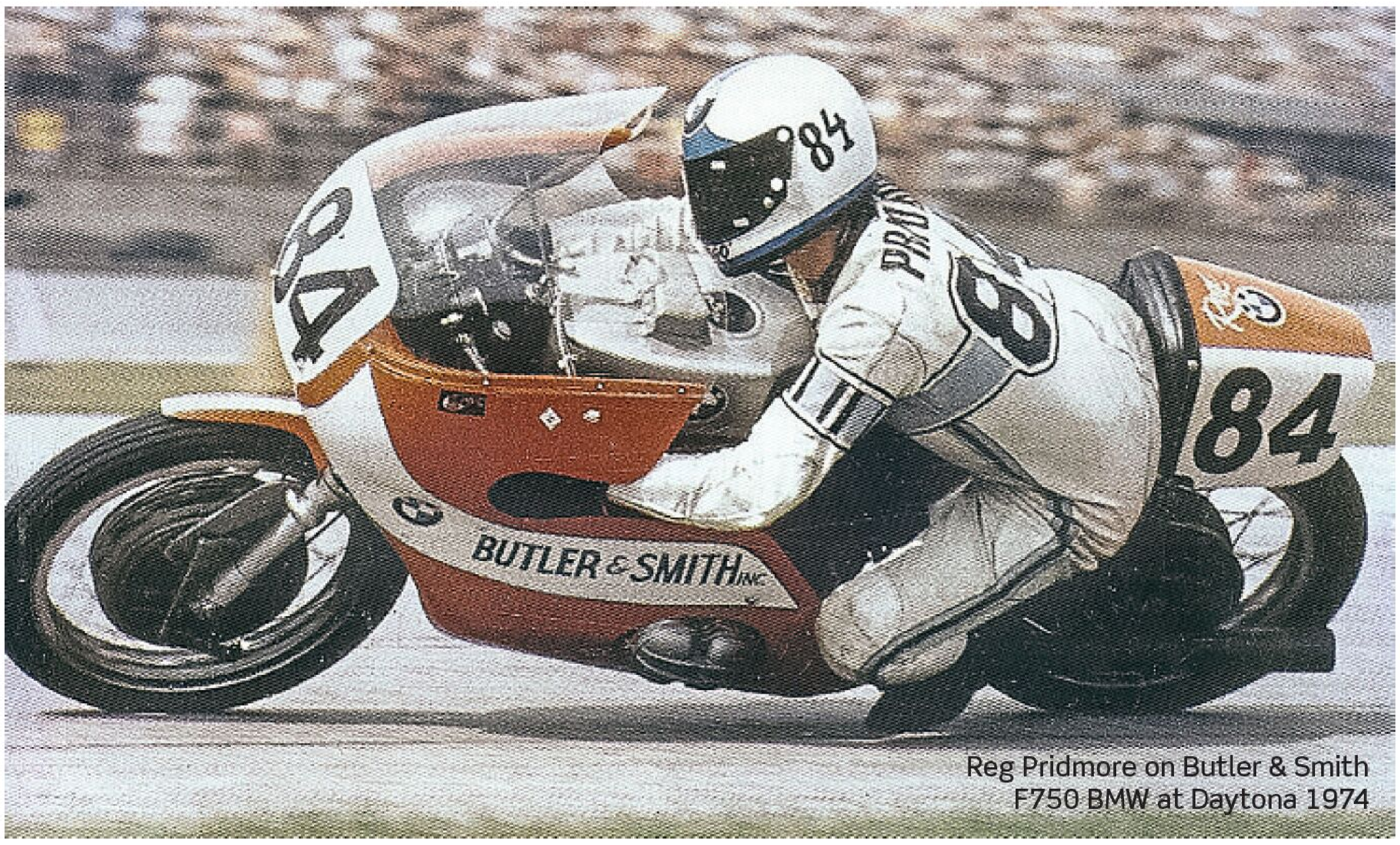
Wrapping the Gietl-tuned motor in a Rob North chassis for 1974, built along the lines of his Triumph-3 frame but with the engine mounted higher up to give more clearance for the horizontal cylinders and with a longer swingarm delivering a 1470mm wheelbase that helped tame the BMW's wayward handling, still didn't allow the Beemers to keep up with the two-strokes, and especially not the new TZ700 Yamaha, whose debut that year had moved the F750 goalposts forever. This was despite Gietl extracting a claimed 98bhp at 10,500rpm from the flat-twin 750cc motor, which, with a remarkable dry weight of 309lb (140kg) – less than the two-stroke triples and fours, amazingly – gave good acceleration and a top speed of 165mph on the Daytona bankings, where Pridmore retired from the 200-miler on the new bike's debut with a broken valve. But the North frame's improved handling, combined with the bike's light weight and good acceleration, did allow teammate Gary Fisher to qualify his Rob North BMW on the front row of the grid for the tight, twisty Laguna Seca AMA National in 1975 alongside future world champion Kenny Roberts' factory Yamaha OW31 and then to battle for the lead with KR before the BMW's rear monoshock failed.

This represented a glorious finale for the F750 Boxers, for the 1974 arrival of the new R90S sportbike in the BMW model range meant that a much better arena for Butler & Smith to demonstrate the worth of its new shaft-drive sportbike to customers sceptical about the German marque's sporting credentials was to go production racing with it… and win. With the TZ750 Yamaha swamping F750 entry lists, and the two-stroke domination of AMA Nationals proving a switch-off for four-stroke-focused race fans, the AMA decided to establish the new superbike class for 1976 as a modern-day revival of the Class C rules for modified streetbikes originally conceived pre-Second World War. Peter Adams came up with a budget reputed to be a then massive $250,000 for Butler & Smith to try to win the AMA Superbike title with a full race version of the R90S created by Geitl and his team. Which they did – but that's another story…

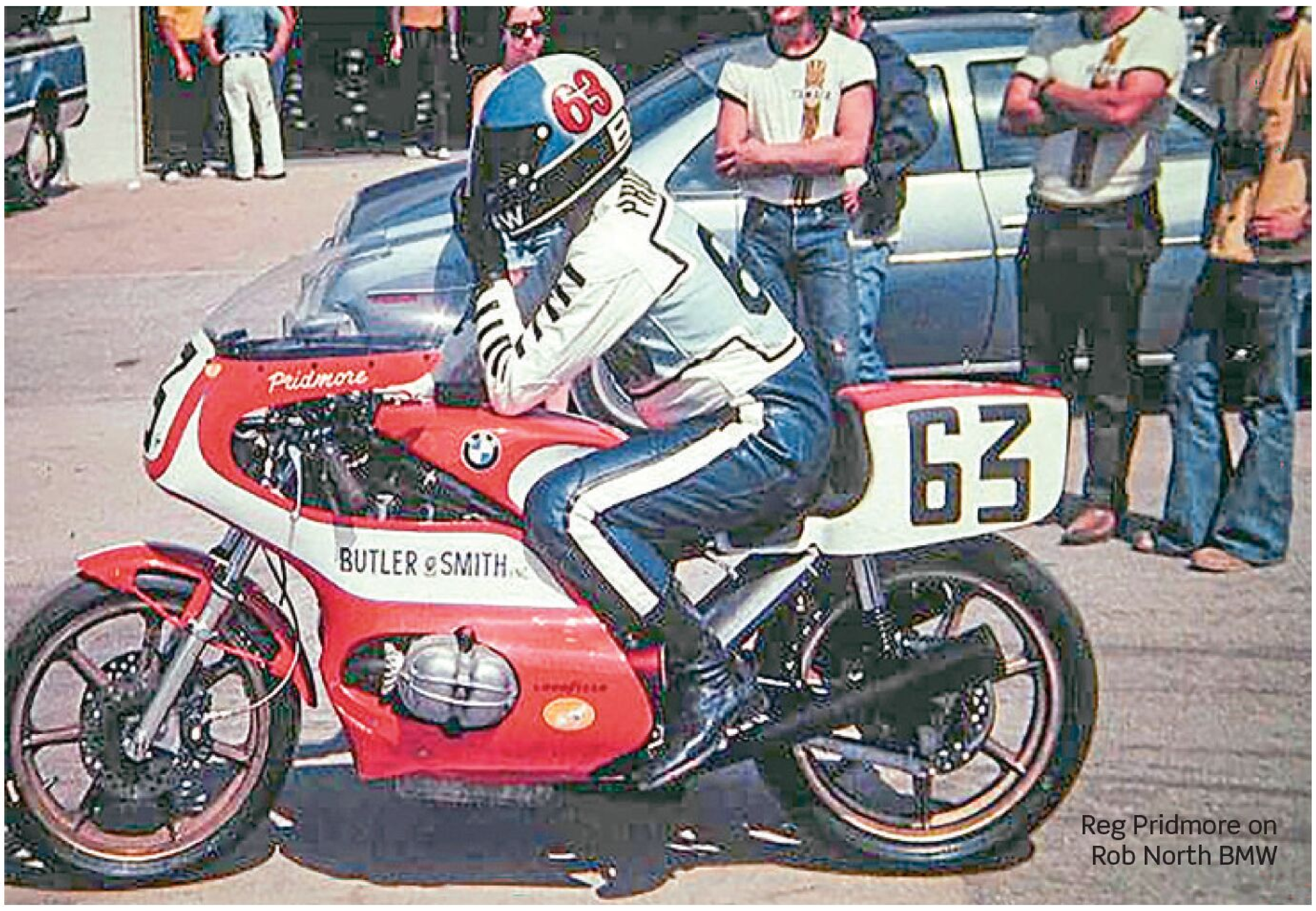
When Butler & Smith switched to superbike racing, its F750 racers became yesterday's papers – so when Washington DC-based sports photographer Wallace ➡



Reg Pridmore en route to victory and debut AMA Superbike title on the R90S at Laguna Seca 1976



Reg Pridmore on Butler & Smith F750 BMW at Daytona 1974



Reg Pridmore on Rob North BMW

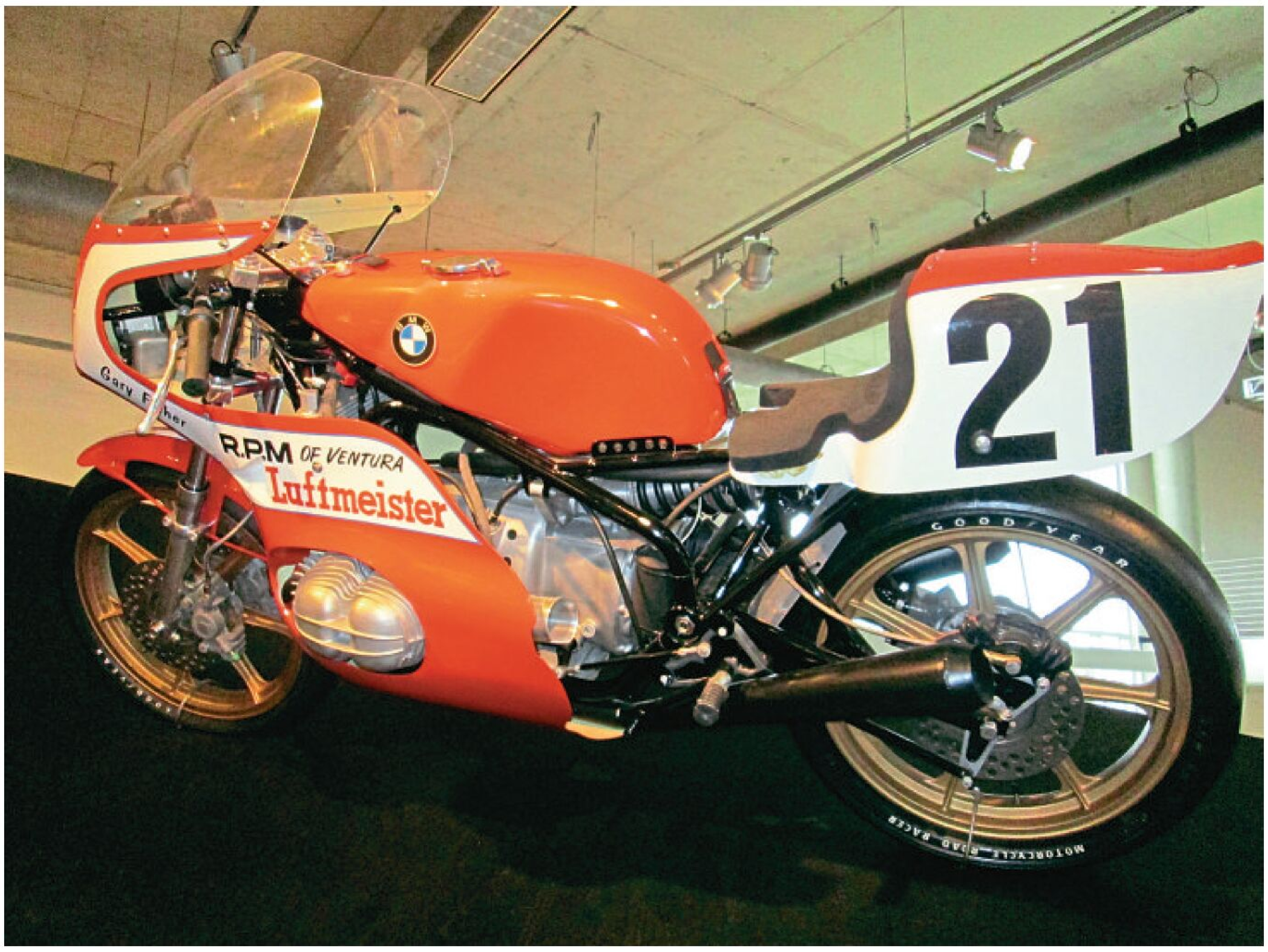
Henderson convinced Udo Geitl to sell him Kurt Leibmann's factory-framed F750 bike, which Illinois BMW dealer Jim Cotherman had borrowed to race in the 1974 Daytona 200 on the bike's final prime time outing, he paid what even back then was a paltry $200 for it – as in, get it off the books! One thing identified it as Liebmann's bike – the massive 250mm Fontana four leading-shoe drum brake he'd used in 1973, whereas Pridmore opted for twin stainless steel discs which probably didn't stop nearly as well as the drum did in the wet conditions Kurt would have had to cope with more often racing the bike in the Northeast USA and Canada than in sunny SoCal! Henderson's time owning the BMW is shrouded in secrecy – he doesn't appear to have raced it – but in 2006, he traded it as a straight swap for a brand-new R1200GT Boxer with Daytona Beach BMW/Triumph/Ducati dealer Bill Perretti, a former historic racer with Team Obsolete. "I took on the BMW franchise in 2004, and coming from vintage racing, I always liked to have the older bikes and memorabilia on display in the showroom," said Bill. "One of my techs immediately knew what the bike was, so I bought it and put it on display."

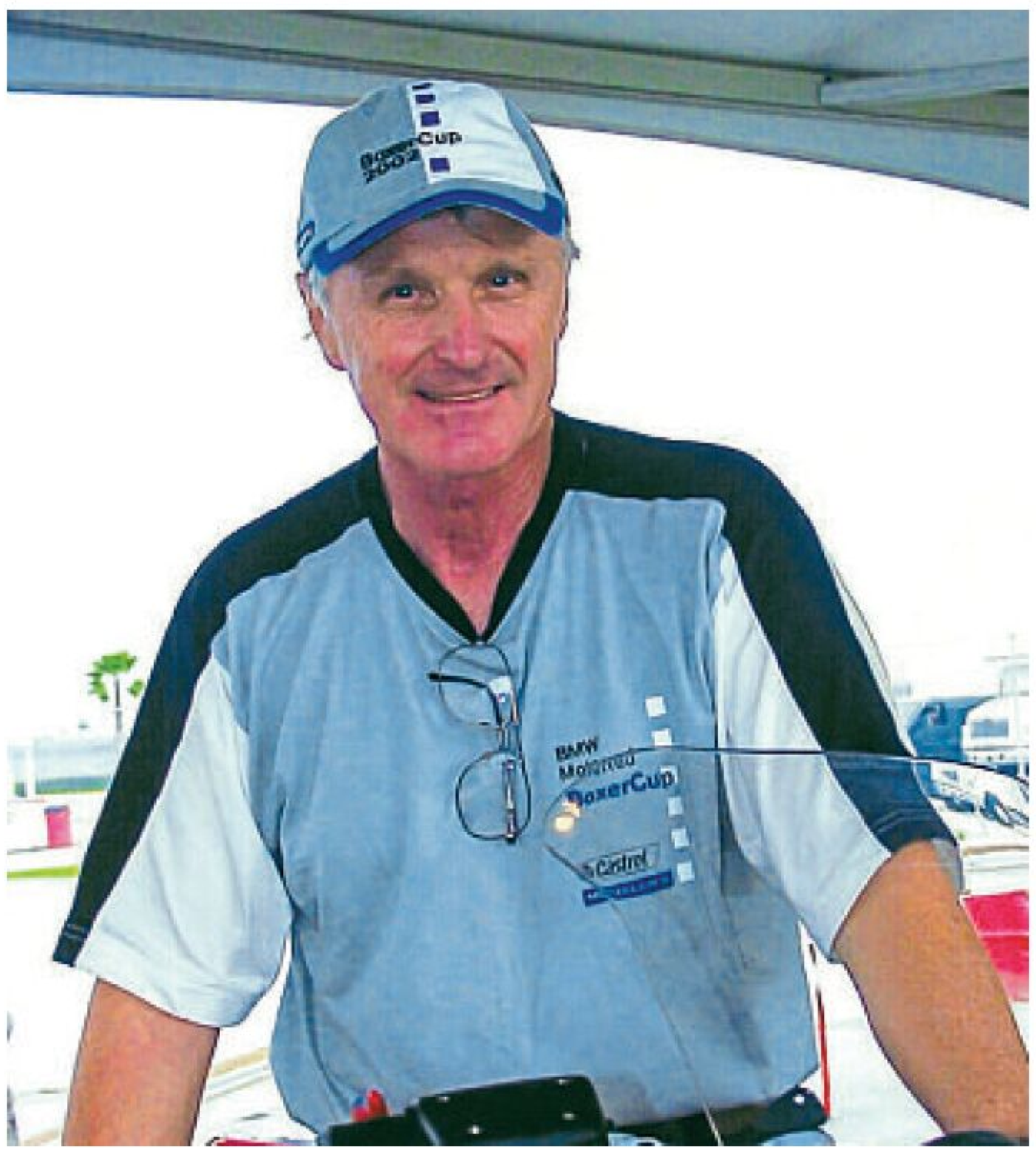
Thanks to its vintage-racing owner I had the chance to ride the bike for a handful of laps of the swoopy, sweeping Barber track in Alabama, during the lunch break of the annual Barber Vintage meeting. Although he'd never found time to ride it himself in such events, after purchasing the bike in semi-derelict state Bill Perretti did completely recommission the engine by entrusting it to Memphis-based tuner Leo Goff. "I didn't want to restore the frame or bodywork because it has the original paint and it's taken 40 years to get like that," Bill said. "But we've checked everything over and it's fully track-ready, even down to a pair of new Avon tyres for you!" Which I had to scrub in on my first couple of laps aboard a motorcycle that I felt completely at odds riding, as much for the way the flanks of the Wixom fairing intrude on the front brake lever and make it pretty hard even for someone like me with a small right hand that's minus a finger or two to reach down and forward to squeeze it – but we'll come to that in a moment…

First, though, let's hear from engine builder Leo Goff. As well as being one of the top bass players on the Memphis blues scene (www.leogoff.net) and both builder and rider of the Norton twin that held NHRA drag racing's No. 1 plate in the mid-1980s, he has also worked on many, many BMW Boxer motors. "What Udo did to make this engine go fast was heroic," says Leo, "but an awful lot of the power came from the reworked cylinder heads flowed by Jerry Branch, which were missing from the engine when Bill got it. What I've done in rebuilding it is to aim for a faithful reproduction of Udo's original handiwork.

Reg Pridmore on Rob North BMW

Udo Geitl (on left) – Daytona 1974 copy


Rob North BMW F750 at the Barber museum, USA

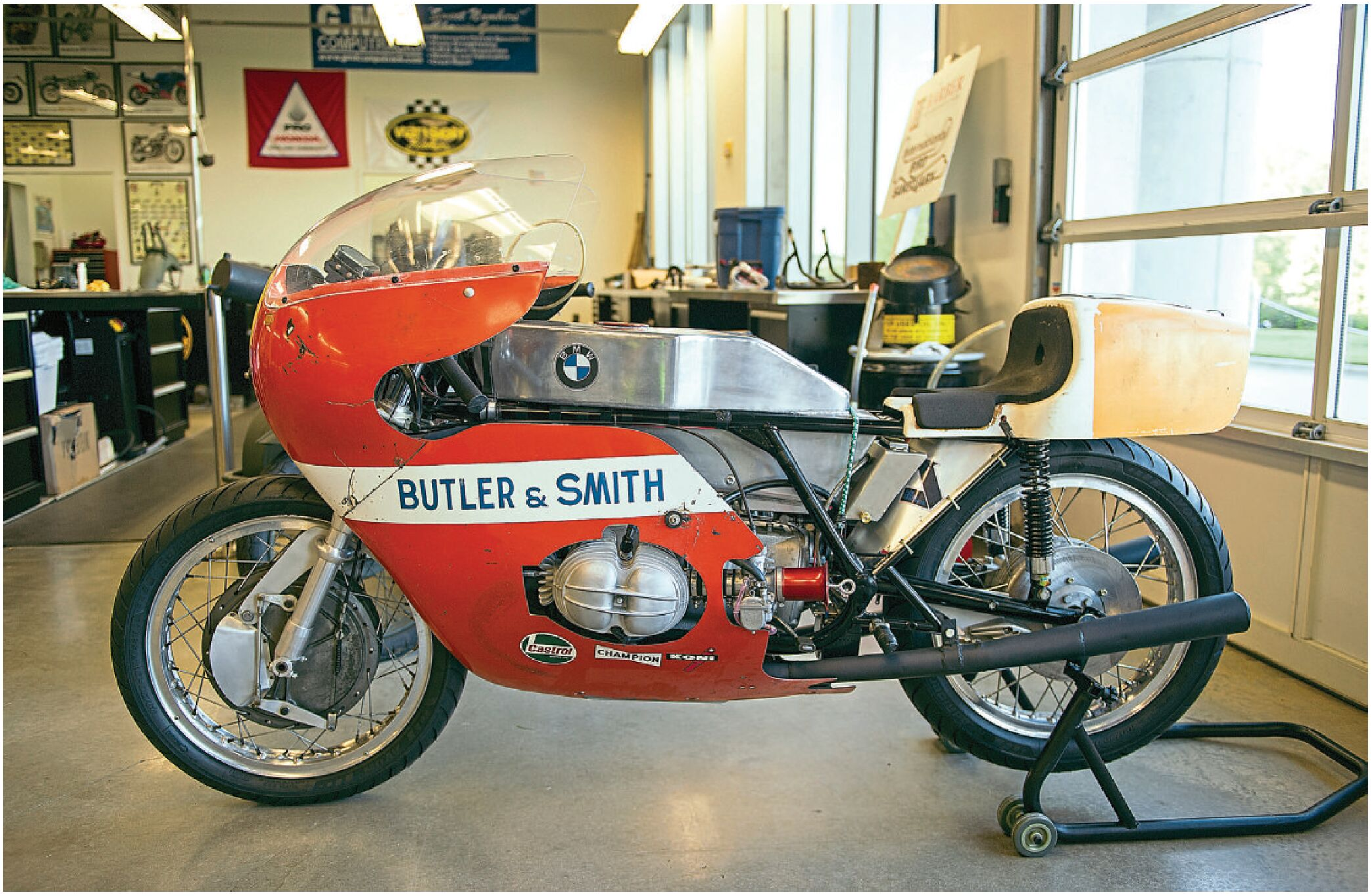

Udo Gietl

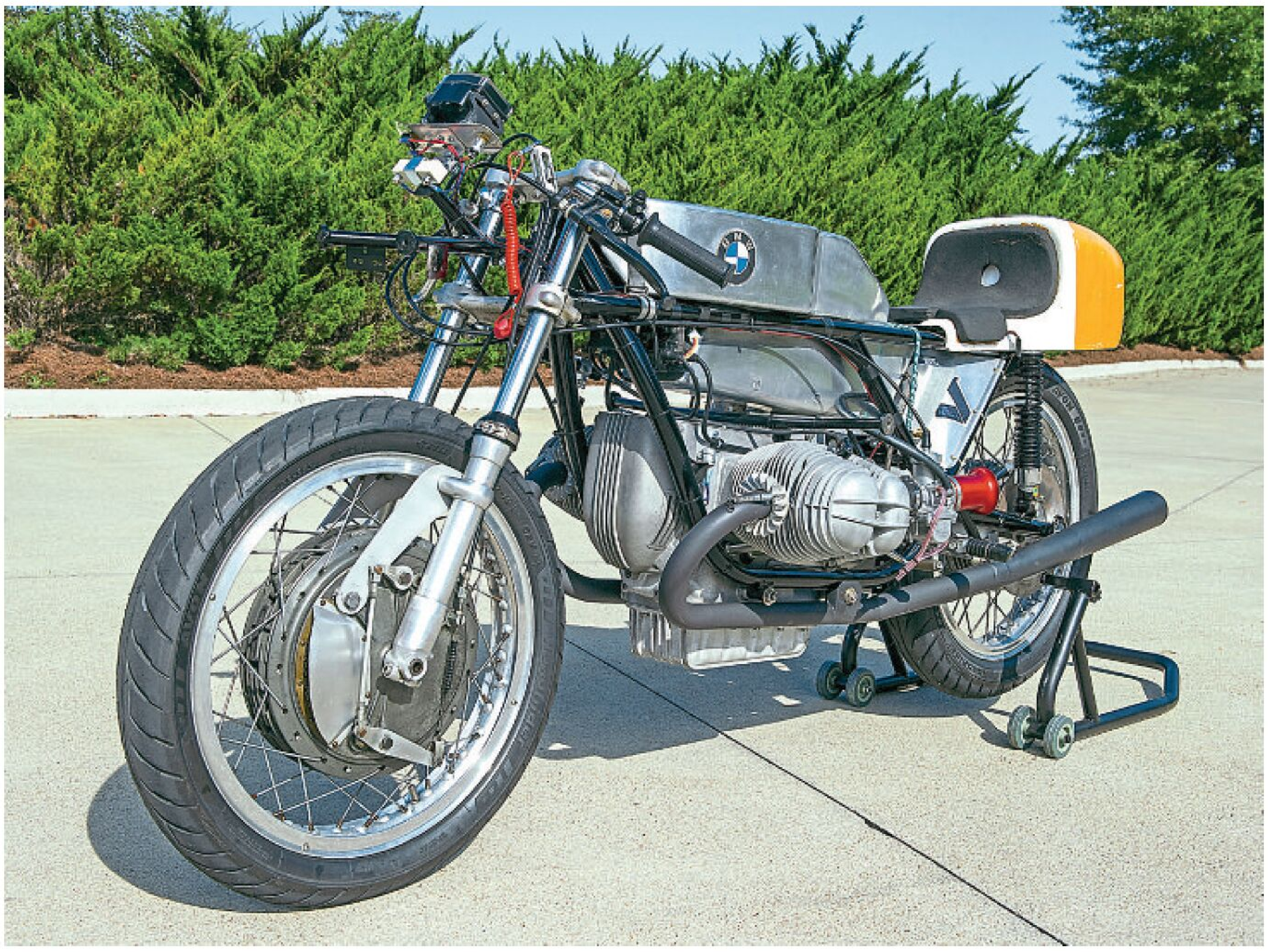
My last dyno run, we had 68bhp at 9000rpm at the rear wheel and 45lb.ft of torque, which I feel represents pretty much where he'd got to with the R75/5 motor before he switched to the R90S in 1975."

Fortunately, the engine crankcase is the original one numbered 001-298280X, to which Goff has fitted cylinders shortened by 10mm, or two cooling fins, to safely provide two degrees of extra lean angle either side before the cylinder heads ground out, a safety margin aided by the adoption of 19-inch wheels front and rear, at a time when 18-inch tyres had long been the hot tip. Special 82mm-bore forged pistons made by JE to Leo Goff's design are mounted via 10mm shorter Carrillo steel rods (titanium originally) to the pushrod BMW flat-twin engine's lightened and rebalanced stock plain-bearing crankshaft, each carrying a special heat-treated steel gudgeon pin that's raised in the skirt to help reduce engine width via the reduced deck height, when combined with narrower rings (though still three of them) and the shortened cylinders. Geitl also machined weight off the flywheel, lightening it by 1.5kg from 3.6kg in stock form for faster pick-up, as well as improved handling with the shaft-drive transmission. And to reduce the risk of oil cavitation, a special high-performance oil pump is fitted, which, being smaller, uses just 3bhp to run rather than the stock Eaton-type pump's 5bhp.

The JE pistons deliver a steep 12.75:1 compression ratio versus 9.5:1 stock, while the two-valve cylinder heads have been ported and gas-flowed and fitted with a larger 44mm inlet valve (42mm stock) and 38mm exhaust set at a 65-degree included angle, both sitting on dual coil springs, running in stock BMW bronze guides and operated via a Typ 336 BMW Sport camshaft driven by a duplex chain. Gietl tried a single-row camchain, but as increased rpm dictated heavier valve springs, the drive sprockets began failing and the duplex chain was reinstated, as here. The original race exhaust with its long, slenderly tapered twin meggas came with the bike, and duly cleaned up had now been refitted, but the Kröber electronic CDI the bike raced with had gone walkabout, so Leo Goff replaced it with a Czech-made PAL magneto of the kind familiar to historic racers everywhere, powered by a 12v battery mounted low down under the gearbox and firing the twin plugs per cylinder head via four separate Accel coils, thus reducing ignition advance to just 32 degrees.

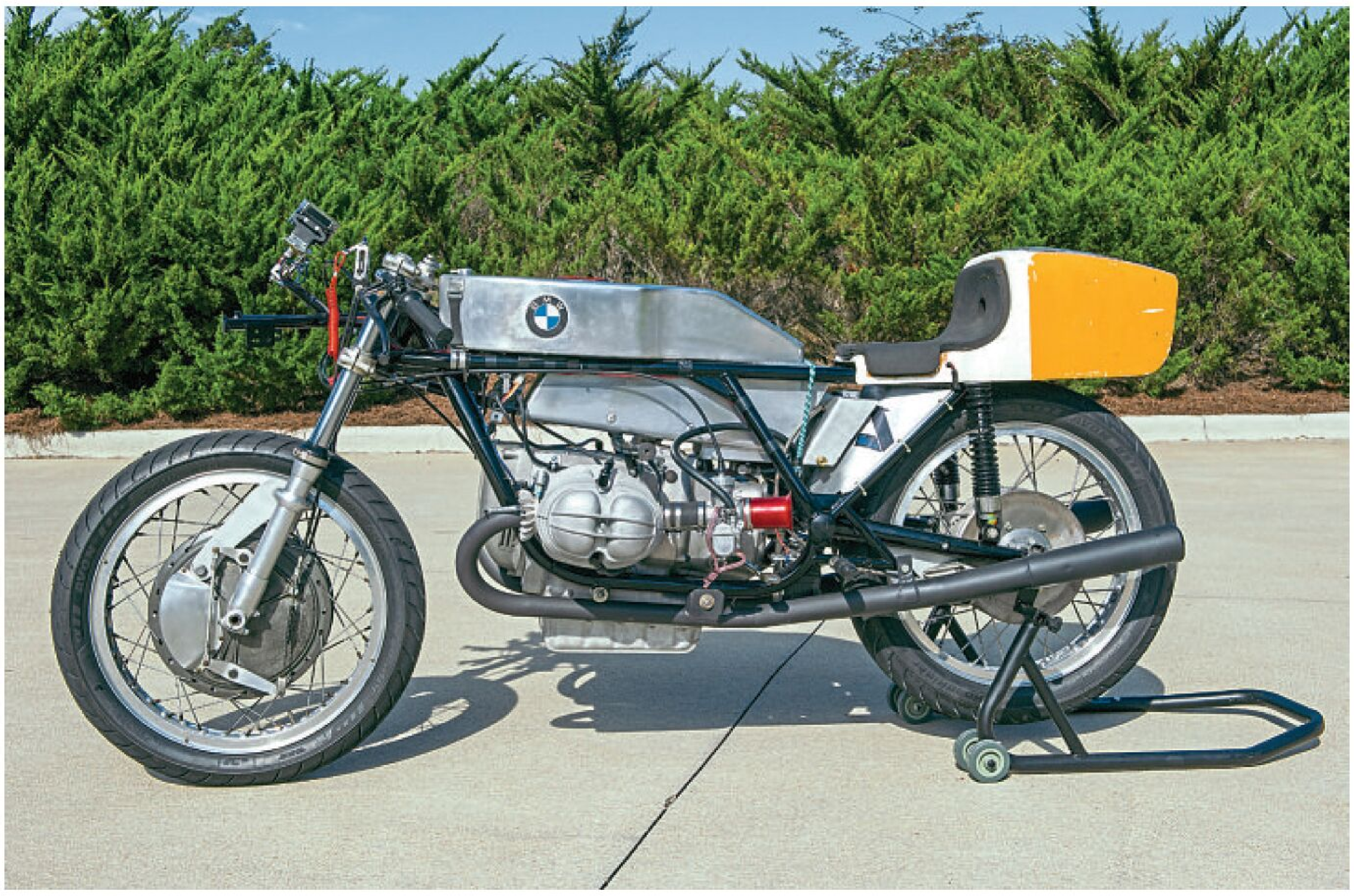
However, Udo Gietl's neatest R75/5 tuning trick – one he couldn't repeat on the R90S, owing to its supposedly stock superbike spec – was also reproduced here, with the cylinder heads' intake ports re-angled by 15 degrees outwards, not only to give a straighter hit at the valves, but also to allow the 34mm Mikunis to breathe cooler, fresher air than the stock 32mm Bing CV carbs which were actually angled slightly inwards. This also had the effect of steering their long blue velocity stacks away from your legs, too. What amounted to 50% more power compared to the stock R75/5 motor's 50bhp delivered at the flywheel at 6,200 rpm was naturally transmitted via BMW's traditional shaft final-drive ➡





arrangement, with the driveshaft running through the right swingarm leg. But on the F750 racer this featured a five-speed gearbox rather than the street R75/5's four-speed transmission, although fortunately perhaps not the rather delicate aftermarket Heyser five-speeder sold in Germany back then. Gietl did indeed install such a gearbox in the R75/5's four-speed gearbox casing, but it indeed proved fragile and had gone from the bike by the time Perretti acquired it. Instead, Leo Goff installed a standard R90S five-speed transmission, which worked fine via a race-pattern left-foot gearshift, matched to the stock, all-metal single-plate diaphragm clutch.

The BMW-built tubular steel duplex cradle frame had raked out steering geometry, with the 35mm Ceriani forks set at a 28-degree head angle in Betor yokes. The 1450mm wheelbase represented a big step up from the 1385mm stride of the R75/5 road bike back in 1972 when the race frame was built, presumably in pursuit of extra stability; the fact it was significantly



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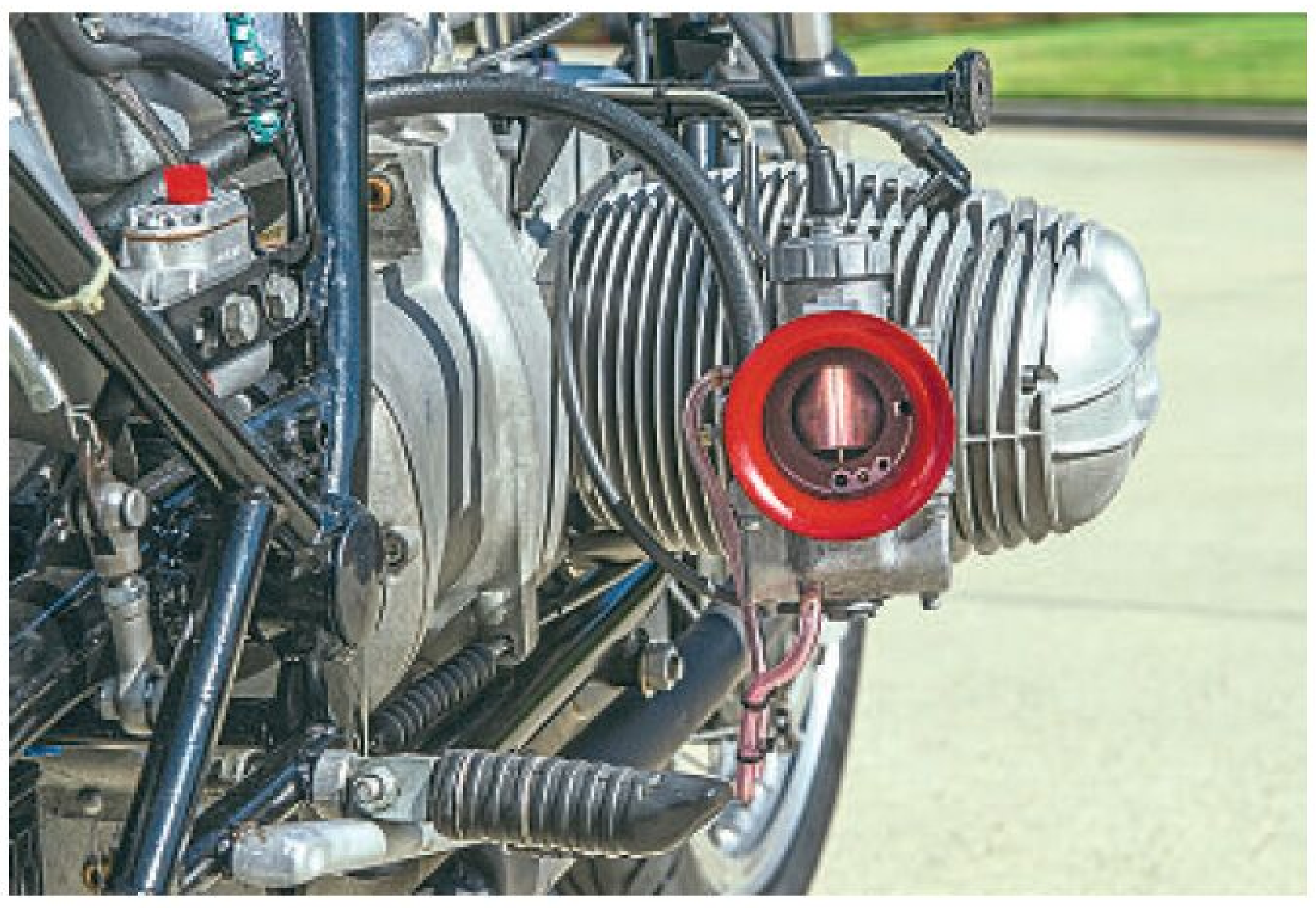


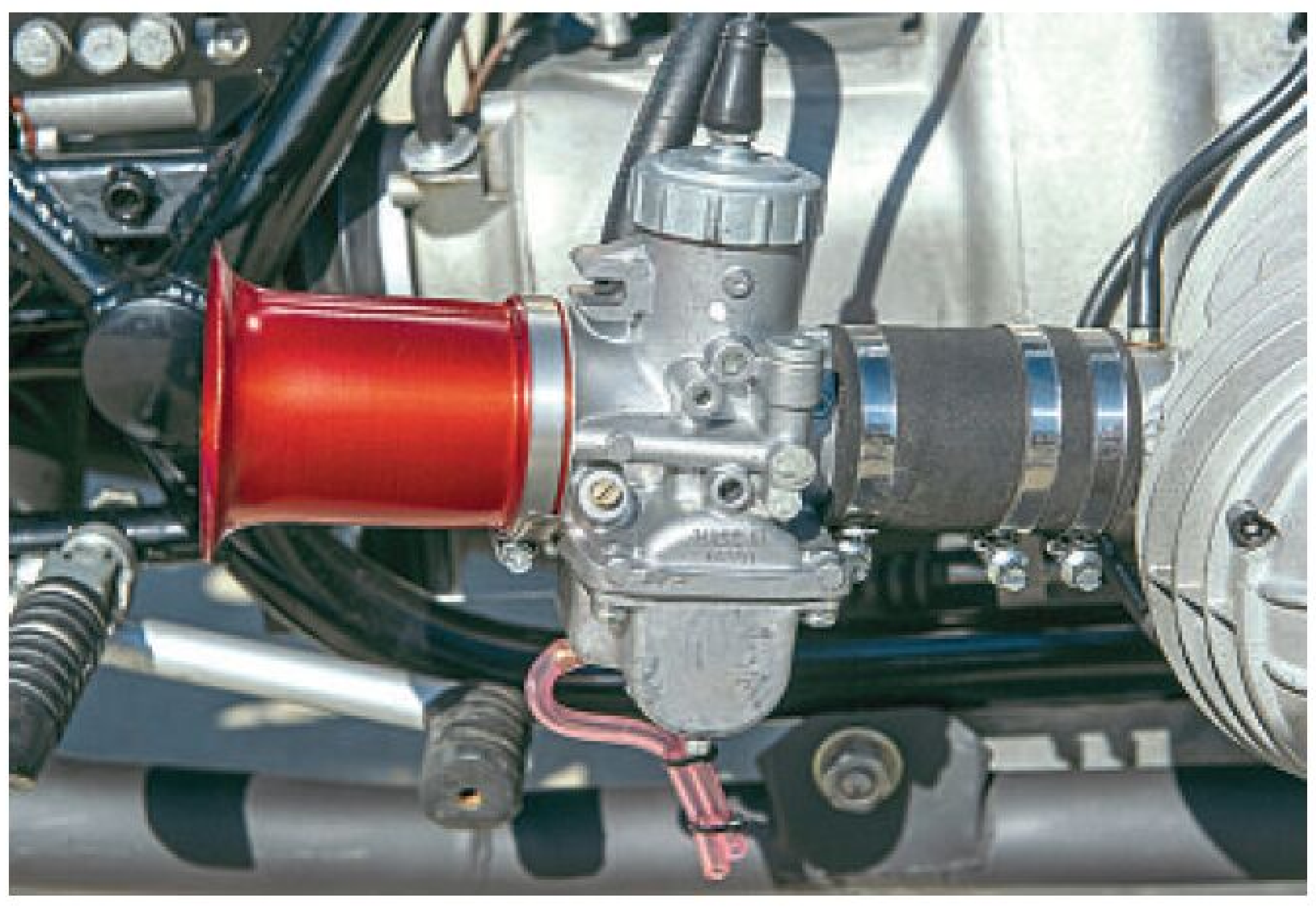
> ***"It was noticeable that power kept building towards that nine grand redline, an open incentive to ignore it in pursuit of more punch even higher up still. But get the Boxer engine chiming in the upper reaches of the tacho dial and the result was a long-legged feeling of irresistible momentum."***

increased to 1435mm with a longer swing arm for the last year of production in 1973 perhaps confirms this. The twin Koni shocks were heavily damped but relatively lightly sprung, with the rather crude-looking rear 10in (254mm) Hurst-Airheart steel disc brake with single-piston caliper matched on this ex-Liebmann bike by the great-looking and pretty effective (when you can reach the lever!) 250mm Fontana 4LS drum. Total weight with oil but no fuel was 348lb (148kg), said Bill Perretti.

A good proportion of that would have to be accounted for by the massive, heavy Wixom fairing, whose all-enveloping nature, once I carefully fed myself aboard the BMW without knocking the carbs with my feet, immediately reminded me of the 1972 ex-Pasolini XR750-TT Harley-Davidson I owned for 25 years, which is now in the Barber Museum. This once had an identical Wixom fairing fitted and looked very nice and ultra-distinctive, plus it was as good for me to tuck away behind at long, fast circuits like Chimay or Monza as it would have been for the BMW F750 riders at Daytona. But it had the same other-worldliness feeling as a mid-1950s dustbin fairing, making you feel very remote from the action because you're cocooned in the all-enveloping bodywork. Its bulk also made the Harley quite hard to place in turns, because you couldn't see the front wheel at all and had to guess at the correct line. I had exactly the same problem riding the BMW at Barber; because you feel so detached from the track, it's hard to ➡

BMW BUTLER & SMITH R75/5 F750 BOXER

ENGINE: Air-cooled pushrod OHV horizontally opposed twin-cylinder four-stroke
DIMENSIONS: 82 x 70.6mm
CAPACITY: 745cc
OUTPUT: 68bhp at 9000rpm (at rear wheel) with 45 ft-lb/Nm 61 of torque
COMPRESSION RATIO: 12.75:1
CARBURATION: 2x 34mm Mikuni
IGNITION: PAL magneto with dual ignition
GEARBOX: Five-speed with shaft final drive
CLUTCH: Single-plate all-metal diaphragm with steel flywheel unit
CHASSIS: Tubular steel duplex cradle frame
SUSPENSION: Front: 35 mm Ceriani telescopic forks Rear: Tubular steel swingarm incorporating shaft final drive inside right leg, with 2x Koni shocks
HEAD ANGLE: 28 degrees
WHEELBASE: 1450mm
WEIGHT: 348lb/148kg with oil, no fuel
BRAKES: Front: 250mm Fontana four leading-shoe drum Rear: 1x 10in/254mm Hurst-Airheart steel disc with single-piston caliper
WHEELS/TYRES: Front: 90/90-19 Avon Roadrider on WM2/1.85in on Borrani wire-spoked rim Rear: 100/90-19 Avon Roadrider on WM3/2.15in Borrani wire-spoked rim
TOP SPEED: 164mph/262kph
YEAR OF CONSTRUCTION: 1972
OWNER: Bill Perretti, Daytona Beach, Florida, USA



judge your turn-in to bends. And no, it's not something you ever get used to, which is why what was once 'my' Harley sits today in the Barber Museum wearing the less iconic but heaps more practical ex-Gary Scott/Laguna Seca short-circuit bodywork I eventually fitted to it to race in Classic F750 events. Incidentally, under the same roof of the world's greatest motorcycle museum is not only the twin of the R75/5-based Butler & Smith F750 BMW test bike, albeit wearing skimpier silver bodywork as raced by Liebmann in 1972, but also one of the 1974 Rob North-framed bikes. It's a pity you can't get close enough to either to compare their chassis designs.

After eventually persuading the F750 Boxer motor into life before the Barber Museum's rear wheel starter needed a new tyre (no chokes on the Mikunis, and squirting gas in the venturis is something you need practice doing to judge the right quantity without flooding it!), the glorious-sounding fruity blat from the long, slenderly tapered twin megaphones brought the memories flooding back of the BMW Rennsport 500 I owned and raced in historic events for a couple of seasons back in the late 1980s, with the distinctive drone of a low-flying airplane emanating at speed from the vibration-proof engine's unsilenced exhausts.

Leo Goff gets an A* rating for his work on rebuilding – re-creating – the Gietl-tuned BMW engine, which had a much friendlier, more rideable power delivery than Udo's later creation, the title-winning R90S superbike I rode a few years ago that's now in the German factory's Mobile Tradition display squad. That fluffed and stuttered if you gassed it up hard anywhere below 5000rpm – the power threshold where its high-lift cams and the megaphone exhausts combined to deliver title-winning performance. The F750 bike was much friendlier, with an extremely flat torque curve from the power threshold at 3800rpm all the way through to peak revs at 9000rpm – there were no dips, and no sign of power tailing off the harder you revved it. Considering this was the first time the bike had been on a racetrack since the engine was rebuilt some years ago, it was a tribute to Leo Goff's set-up work on the dyno that it went so well right from the start, although the F750 BMW was reluctant to accept full throttle until the needle on the Kröber tacho was reading four grand or better, and below that, you had to coax it up higher up the rev scale via the clutch lever.

But while a 5000rpm powerband was plenty to play with in making the Beemer fly, it was noticeable that power kept building towards that nine grand redline, an open incentive to ignore it in pursuit of more punch even higher up still. But get the Boxer engine chiming in the upper reaches of the tacho dial and the result was a long-legged feeling of irresistible momentum, as well as an extraordinary lack of vibration – the ultra-smooth flat-twin motor had no Norton-type vibes or Triumph tingles, even at high rpm. The lightened bottom end to the BMW's engine reduced the gyroscopic effect of the lengthways crank but couldn't disguise it completely – like when changing down a gear on the overrun while cranked over entering a turn, when the BMW wanted to sit up on you, and make you miss the apex. Completing downshifts while still upright before peeling into a turn, and blipping the throttle hard between downshifts resolved this, by dialling up extra revs to cancel out the G-forces – but it's an acquired skill. However, the lightened crank did deliver zestful pick-up out of Barber's slower turns.

No getting away from it, though – the BMW's handling was pretty truck-like. It's a meaty, heavy motorcycle which didn't much like turning into the apex and suffered from pronounced understeer both on part and full throttle exiting a left-hander because of the left-to-right rotation of the Boxer motor. That's even the case with the lightened crank cancelling out some of the side effects of its lengthways location, and it did inevitably rise and fall again on the suspension in trademark shaftie style each time I hit another ratio on the surprisingly sweet-action five-speed gearbox's left-foot race-pattern (up for first) gearshift. By mid-1970s standards, the BMW's transmission felt very refined, with no need to use the light-action clutch for upward shifts, presumably because of Udo Gietl's hard work in machining all that weight off the flywheel.

The ergos of the BMW were very individual, with a typically long stretch over the bare aluminium fuel tank to the quite steeply dropped clipon 'bars. Thanks to the long wheelbase and the engine being moved forward in the frame to load up the front wheel, the Mikuni carbs' velocity stacks didn't interfere with my feet and shins as much as I'd expected, but there's no way you could climb around this bike to hang off it, and starting it requires third party help – an electric starter would have been nice! But the way the hard, stiff fibreglass wing of the Wixom fairing intruded onto my right arm, making it sometimes hard to reach the steeply dropped front brake lever, had me convinced I was pushing my luck by riding the BMW in anything approaching anger. But given that this was its first time on a race track in almost 40 years, there's nothing that half a day of set-up wouldn't fix – and when I did manage to give that lovely big Fontana brake a good squeeze, it stopped the BMW really well. Check out 'my' Harley in the Barber Museum, and you'll see it still has the same identical 250mm Fontana drum brake as the BMW does, which I fitted to replace the pathetic – and dangerous – Honda stainless steel discs it had on when I bought it. See, history can repeat itself…! CBG

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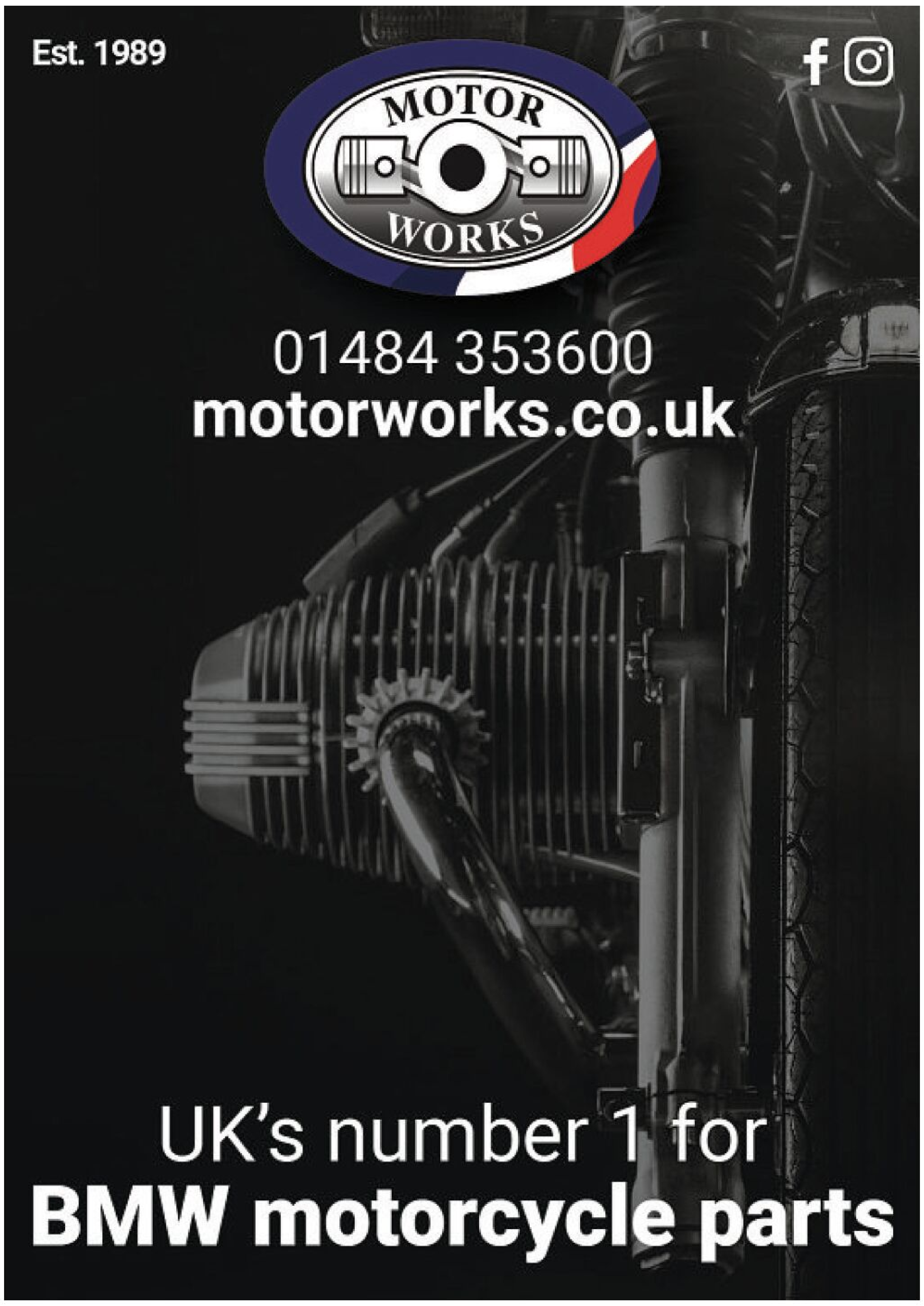

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Fed up with fuel issues? Need something cleaner than clean while your bike goes into winter storage that won't gum up the works or rot your O-rings?

Motorcyclists, motorists, and race teams from Berkshire and beyond can now power their vehicles with an ethanol-free biofuel blend following the installation of the region's first SUSTAIN pump at Richard Thorne Classic Cars, near Reading. The 1000-litre overground fuel pump, one of only two in the UK, offers accessible, high-performance fuel made in part from food waste and other sustainable content.

Compatible with all engines that use standard forecourt petrol, SUSTAIN Classic Super 33 by Coryton allows drivers to reduce their environmental impact without replacing their current ICE vehicle. Compared to a standard E10 forecourt fuel, which uses up to 10% sustainable content, this fuel contains 33% sustainable content and can be used without any engine modifications. It is also E0 (ethanol-free), making it suitable for classic vehicles and ideal for those looking to put their bike into storage over the winter.

SUSTAIN Classic Super 33 utilises second-generation biomass such as food wastes, straw, by-products, or waste from crops which wouldn't be used for consumption. This material recycles the carbon that already exists in our atmosphere, rather than releasing additional CO2 that is currently locked underground in fossil fuels.

A wider range of sustainable fuel will also be available by the drum from Richard Thorne Classic Cars (RTCC), including blends which contain up to 80% sustainable content, delivering a 65% saving on greenhouse gas emissions, and specialist racing fuels. SUSTAIN Classic Super 33 is on sale at the pump at Richard Thorne Classic Cars is priced at £4.50 per litre, which might seem dear, but how much is cleaning a gummed-up carb going to cost? SUSTAIN is fully certified, tested, and developed in the UK.

Drivers wanting to find out more about RTCC's product range and opening times can visit **www.rtcc.co.uk/sustain-fuels**. You can also visit **sustain-fuels.com,** where a list of eight other retailers can be found.

Half now, half later finance offer from Royal Enfield

Royal Enfield is introducing the 50/50 APP 0% APR offer to a range of 650 and 450 models, alongside a new lower 5.9% APR representative rate for PCP and HP deals on all 450 and 650 models.

The 50/50 0% APR finance offer now applies to the Bear 650, Classic 650, Super Meteor 650, Himalayan 450 and Shotgun 650. Those taking up the offer pay half the bike's price up front and can then use it for two years before paying the other half or return it, subject to a milage limit of 4000 miles per annum. Exceed that and it costs an extra 10p a mile. The deal means that new owners can ride away on a new Bear 650 by paying £3374.50 now, with nothing more to pay for two years before parting company with the same amount two years later to keep the bike.

A new promotional APR of 5.9% APR representative is also now available for all 2025 450cc and 650cc Royal Enfield models, offering low deposits and low repayments. Details can be found at local Royal Enfield dealerships or check out the available financing options on the Royal Enfield UK website.

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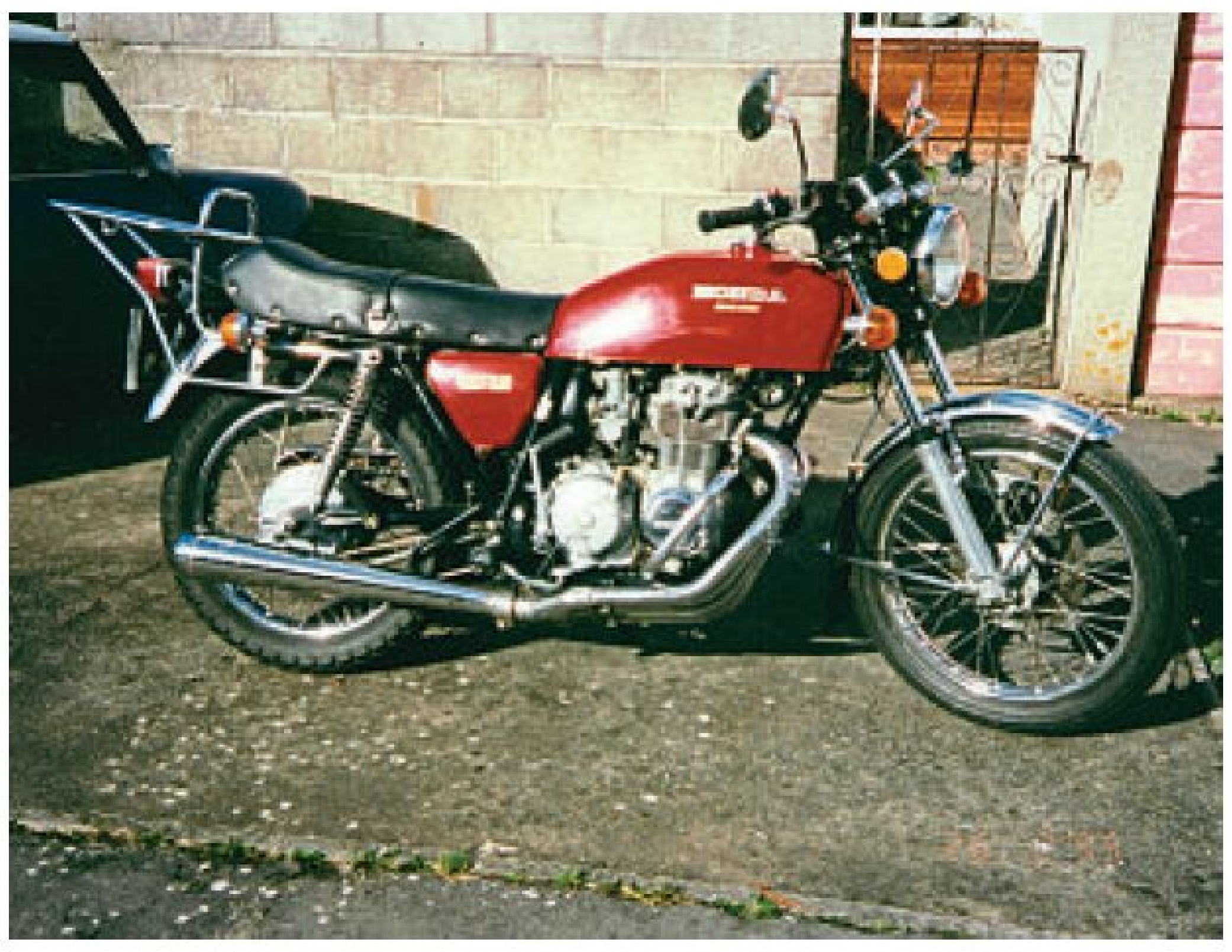
Hunt is on for Pete’s old Honda



CBG friend Dan, from Fabulous Biker Boys, has asked if anyone can help reunite his cousin Pete Burgess with a Honda CB400F he parted company with many years ago.

Pete bought the Honda in 1995 and if the current owner is interested, he would dearly love to buy it back. “The registration number is MPN**2P and I paid £1000 for it,” he said.

Checks indicate that although the bike is currently on a SORN, it was last registered in 2018 and has a current MoT. The current owner can contact Dan at **dan@fab-biker.co.uk** if they want to do a deal.

New flip front from LS2

LS2 has launched a new range of smart flip-front crash helmets at a budget price.

The new Scope II modular helmet adds ECE 22.06 approval, improved chin guard security, LS2 intercom readiness and a new fully removable lining. At a very reasonable price, starting at £129.99, it comes with features you’d usually expect on pricier lids. It is legal to use on UK roads in both the open and closed positions, weighs 1750g, and comes in three external shell sizes across the full XS to 3XL size range. The main visor is quick-release and scratch-resistant, with a wide aperture for all-round visibility. It comes with a Pinlock anti-fog insert included and there’s an internal sun visor too. There are three solid colours priced at £129.99 and four options with graphics at £149.99. Find out more at **ls2helmets.com**

Watsonian offer a fitting kit to attach their British-built sidecars to Spitfires

Watsonian has come up with a new fitting kit to turn the CCM Spitfire single into the grooviest sidecar outfit you can ride. Designed and developed specifically for the British-built bikes, the kit bolts onto four mounting points on the Spitfire’s steel tube frame. These are expertly positioned to allow optimum triangulation when attaching the arms linking the bike to the sidecar to ensure everything stays firmly in place.

Manufactured by Watsonian in its Cotswold factory, the fitting kit sells for £1250 and is suitable for its current range of sidecars using either a platform or perimeter frame chassis. The Spitfire looks best with a Watsonian Prescott sidecar (RRP £5795), which has genuine aeronautical links. The original version was made using surplus RAF drop tanks from Mosquito fighter bombers.

See the full range of Watsonian sidecars, clothing, and accessories at **watsonian-squire.com**

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Triumph gives the Bonneville a good going over

The successful Bonneville range gets a little nip here and a tuck there for 2026...

Back in the 1960s when British motorcycle manufacturers reigned supreme, in the lofty offices of Small Heath, Meriden and Plumstead, the bosses paid little mind to customer feedback; it usually took a collective of important US dealerships to get anything done. New models were released each year, but the changes were usually limited to new paint schemes and replacing poorly designed parts with slightly less poorly designed parts. The very idea of asking the customers what they wanted, or indulging in any other kind of market research, was treated with disdain.

Things have changed, thank goodness. These days, the customer may not be always right, but their opinions are generally considered. That being said, few manufacturers go into new model development launches on the scale of the latest campaign by Triumph Motorcycles for its Bonneville family.

The Hinckley-based manufacturer, the UK's biggest bike maker by a long way, is spending the next six months launching updated and new models. The company has increased sales by 136% since 2019 and sold more than 140,000 motorcycles in the past 12 months.

The backbone of the company is the Modern Classic range, based around the long-lived Bonneville twin engine, which first arrived in 2002 and has been regularly updated ever since. The importance of this range to the future of the Triumph brand sees the launch of nine updated versions of its twin-cylinder range, all focussed on the latest version of the Bonneville engine, which Triumph says will be sold alongside the existing high-performance 900 and 1200 Speed Twin and Thruxton models. The Speed Twin got an upgrade last year. Triumph lists the 1200 Thruxton RS model on its website as a current model, despite production officially finishing at the end of 2024.

Hard at work, Triumph identified the main markets for all its twins Then, it fine-tuned the models to attract more sales. At the centre are the Bonneville-branded twins, the T100 and the two T120 models. The T100 with the 900cc engine is an entry-level way into Triumph ownership and targeted at younger or newly qualified riders. It's also smaller than the T120, so better for smaller riders. The T120 comes in two versions: a more traditional model with a classic paint scheme that harks back to the 1960s style, while top of the range is the T120 Bonneville

Black, which combines the classic lines of the standard T120 but comes with a with a darker 'street' look and features stylish modern detailing, intending to attract buyers from other brands. All three bikes get Triumph's OCABS cornering control system, new LED headlights, USB-C connections for devices, and new colour schemes, with cruise control as standard on the T120 and available as an accessory on the T100.

There are two new street custom or cruiser models, which, with styling and equipment changes, also come with a new and significant feature.

The 1200cc Bonneville Bobber remains Triumph's cool street 'custom' model. The fresh version gets all the new kit of the T120, with the addition of a bigger, petrol tank and a significant redesign, tidying up the lines. The other big change for the Bobber is the introduction of an easy-to-upgrade A2 licence performance setting. The intention is to attract newly qualified riders, and the Bobber can be upgraded to full power once the owner moves from A2 to full category A.

There is a new version of the Speedmaster model too. This established 1200cc cruiser gets a brand-new look and a stylish semi-heritage paint scheme on the bigger tank. As well as A2 licence compatibility, the Speedmaster has, like the Bobber, been given alloy rims, a set of straight bars, and wider pillion and rider seats for greater comfort on long rides, with the pillion perch removable for those who prefer to ride alone.

The models with the most comprehensive updates are Scramblers. Following feedback from owners, Triumph has given them upgrades to the suspension, with Öhlins shocks and USD forks on the 1200XE and Showa shocks and USD forks on the 900. While the twin disc 1200 does get a redesign, it is the 900 – one of Triumph's key models in attracting new brand ownership – which has been given buckets of freshness. There is new bodywork, the suspension upgrades, a new swingarm, spoked aluminium wheels, a new radial brake caliper, cornering and traction control, and new instruments and lighting.

This is evolution rather than revolution, as the range is so successful you'd be prudent to stick with your current hand. But if you fancy a new Triumph, they just got better. Unfortunately, prices were still unavailable at time of going to print. This is just the start for Triumph, as it has an ambitious roll-out plan of new models across the range that will run into next spring.

900
SCRAMBLER

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350
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We Went to

2025 Classic Motorcycle Mechanics Show

The Autumn Stafford Show concentrates on the newer classics and didn't disappoint

Words and photos by Oli Hulme

IF EVER THERE WAS A SHOW IN WHICH delights lurk around every corner, it's Stafford on an October morning. The Classic Motorcycle Mechanics show, like the International Show in April, has its own distinct attractions, with autumn's main focus being machines from the 1960s to the 1990s, which gives plenty of variety.

Right out of the gate there was one of the finer examples of British street sleeper, the double-take-tastic Norvin of Gerry Fry. It was built by taking the frame of a crashed early Norton Commando, cutting out the damaged lower frame tubes, offering up a Vincent Rapide engine, and discovering that the swingarm spindle on the Commando frame matched that of the Vincent suspension pivot, then swapping the rear cylinder head for a front unit to keep the Commando oil tank and cutting the bottom out of a Roadster tank to accommodate extra wiring. Sounds simple when you say it quickly, doesn't it?

Across the aisle was Paul Cann's amazing nut-and-bolt concours Kawasaki Avenger 350. Original down to the bones and rebuilt from an import from DK Motorcycles, this is a work of the restorer's art… from the period pattern Dunlop

MORIWAKI
NGK
Wayne
YNE GARDNER TRIBUTE

250 Mach 1
XDiavel
Streetfighter
907ie
450 R/T
Monster
Multistrada
916
851
DUCATI

YAMAHA
CLASSIC

tyres to the torque marks on the engine mounting nuts, from the external heads on the bolts being polished but the faces of those bolts being unpolished, as would have been the case when the bike sat in the dealership, to the faintly mismatched grey/brown cable outers, because that's how they would have appeared in 1965, coming as they would have from different suppliers.

Paul's Avenger won the day despite stiff competition from an RD350LC Yamaha, a GT380 Suzuki, and another Suzuki, a tiny and immaculate mid-1960s step-thru.

At the other end of the scale was Steve Marsay's 32-year-old, 1700-mile Kawasaki ZZR1400 on the VJMC stand, a pristine machine that scooped second place.

Up on the balcony was a 500cc twin made from two MZ 250 engines, the only Jawa Tramp 350ccc twin adventure bike in UK captivity and a 1938 172cc model 28 CZ. This machine included amazing period touches including the original toolkit and a mirror-image CZ badge on the headlight glass, arranged so that the light would send the shadow of the company logo. The

➡

Vulcan Riders Association

And the winner is…

A stack of other trophies were awarded, too…

Club trophies
Best Japanese: LC Club
Best Non-Japanese: International Laverda Owners' Club
Best Mixed-Make: UK Two-Stroke Club
Best Local Area Club: Wilts Classic Motorcycle Club
Club Stand 3rd: Italian Motorcycle Owners' Club
Club Stand 2nd: Kawasaki Triples Club
Club Stand 1st: Kettle Club
Best Trade Stand: Roadskin
Best Continental: 1974 Ducati 750 GT – John Turner
Best Off-road Bike: 1967 Greeves Challenger – Chris Dakin
Best Street Special: 1972 Triumph – Vic Shields
Most Original Bike: Yamaha RD250 – Steve Mitchell
Best Custom: 1994 Harris Magnum 4 – D Ollard
Future Classic: Honda CBR1000RR – Karl Wood
Best Competition: 1954 BSA Daytona A7
Best Scrambler: 1994 Suzuki RM125 Super Evo – David Lewis
Best Trials: 1979 Seeley TL200E – Dave Butler
Best Enduro/Trail: 1975 Bultaco Frontera – Adrian Hawkins
Best Rotary: 1976 Suzuki RE5 – Charlie Owens
Best Yamaha: Yamaha DS6 – Tony Harmer
Best Sub-100cc: 1966 Suzuki M30 – Heidi Cockerton
Best Vintage Japanese Pre-1970: Yamaha YDA – Richard Tracy
Best Japanese Modified: 1972 Kawasaki S2 – Lee Millington
Best Racing Machine: 1994 Seeley Matchless G50
Best Grand Prix Display: Scottish Classic Racing Motorcycle Club
Most Technical Interest: 2010 Suzuki B King Turbo – Kevin Hunter
Best Ex-TT: 2019 Tyco BMW – Michael Dunlop/Steve Foster
Best In Show: 1967 Kawasaki A7 Avenger – Paul Cann
Best In Show Runner-up: 1993 Kawasaki ZZR1100 – Steve Marsay

Pre-1960s
1st: 1938 CZ25B – Bob Clarke
2nd: 1952 Triumph Speed Twin – George Veitch
3rd: 1928Rudge Sports – Tony Trueman

1960s
1st: 1965 Yamaha YSD3C – Colin Day
2nd: 1963 Suzuki 50 – Andy Baldwin
3rd: 1961 Triumph Bonneville

1970s
1st: 1979 Honda Phil Read Replica – Richard Holmes
2nd: 1976 Benelli 750 Sei
3rd: 1972 Suzuki GT380

1980s
1st: 1984 Kawasaki z1300 – Keith Felsted
2nd: 1982 Honda MBX80 – Dan Jones
3rd: 1986 Kawasaki GPZ900R – Peter Howton

1990s
1st: 1999 Ducati 748SPS – Tom Becket
2nd: 1992 Kawasaki ZXR750 – Wayne Heeley
3rd: 1991 Yamaha TZR250

CZ took home best Pre-1960s. The TR3OC brought along a replica of Prototype P1 – the very first Triumph Trident which uses one of the original Trident prototype engines in the Triumph Bonneville frame, as originally produced and sent to the USA for testing.

Mopeds there were in droves, with personal favourites being a 500-mile Benelli with the most 1990s bodywork you have ever seen, and a delightful Ducati as used by the Italian post office and made in Spain. And, not quite a moped, but close to it, a 94mph Kawasaki AR80!

My favourite was a remarkable BSA/CCM road-going single from the late 1970s, recreated by ace bike builders Joe and Emily Holliday, of The Wurks, of which more in a future issue.

There were a handful of Moriwaki Kawasaki replicas too, delighting special guest Wayne Gardner, who, along with fellow legend Roger Marshall, kept the banter going with funny and on occasion poignant tales of their days on the track and away from it, culminating in the auction of one of Wayne's Bush hats which had been given to the late great paddock journalist John Brown. The auction raised £240 for the British Heart Foundation.

Outside was the howl of race bikes, a bike park packed with machines worthy of show slots, and for sale in the jumble was the odd bargain and the even odder item of extremely rare exotica – including one of only 200 750cc BSA A70 twins made as homologation specials in 1972 to create a racing team in the US. Nicky and Ian, of Roadskin Jeans, won Best Trade Stand, and the award for greatest sense of fun (AKA Best Club Stand) went to the Suzuki GT750 owners from the Kettle Club, who marked their 30th birth in a blizzard of polyester, flares, and chest hair… and a spectacular display of synchronised pointing. CBG

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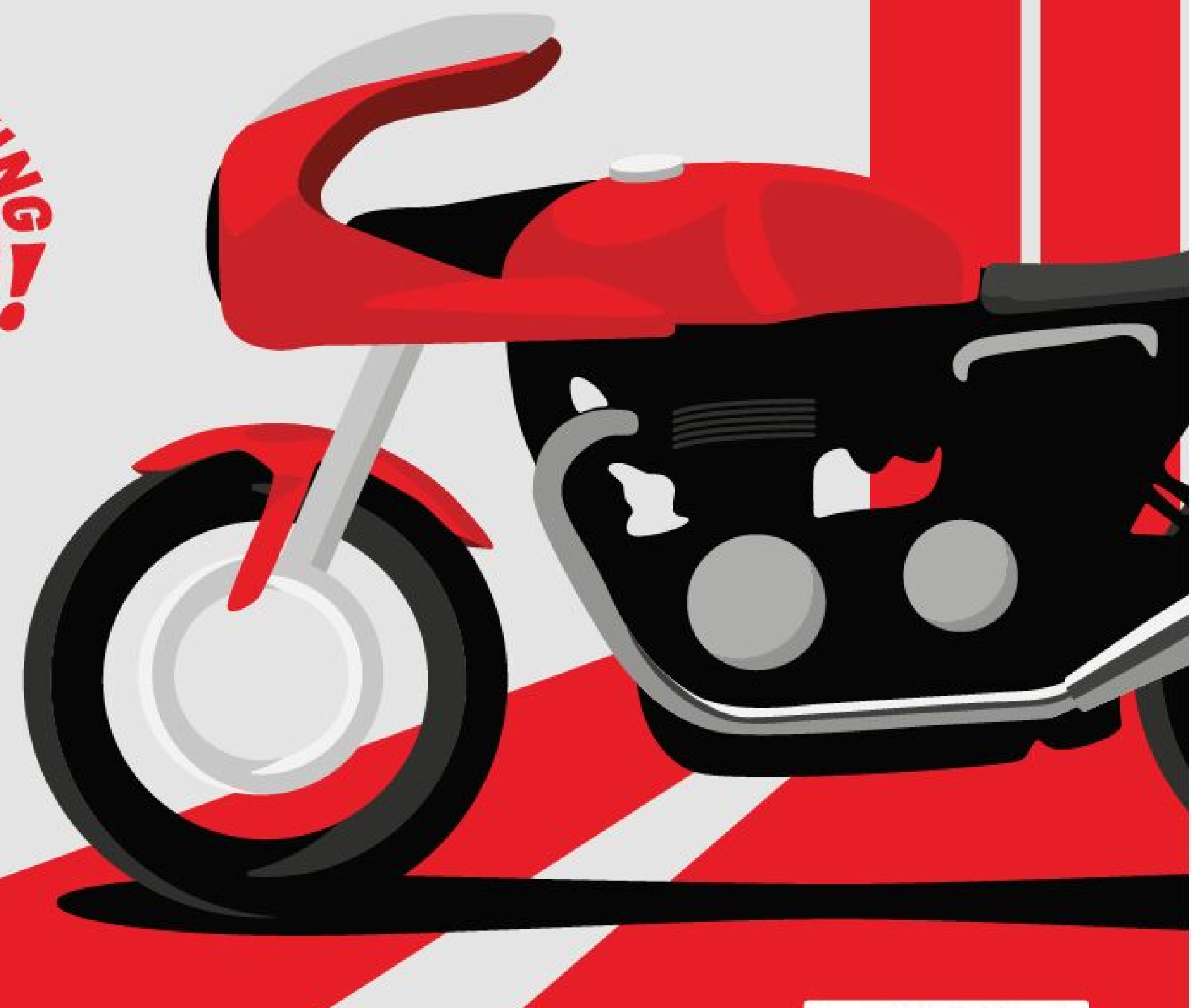

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Your guide to...

Kawasa

It stood out then and still stands out today. The H1 makes a great classic, but does it live up to its 'Widowmaker' nickname?

Words by Oli 'I want one' Hulme, **with photography by** Gary 'oh, another old bike' Chapman

THE PACE OF MOTORCYCLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE 1960s was astonishing. These days, a major manufacturer might spend two years on a new paint scheme and announce it with a full media launch and mass of information, while a revised set of switchgear is treated like a space rocket launch. In the mid-1960s, they did things slightly differently.

Kawasaki had tried and failed to build motorcycles in the mid-1950s with the Meihatsu brand, and then in 1960 entered into a partnership with Meguro. Kawasaki was very much the senior partner in this enterprise. It was not called Kawasaki Heavy Industries for nothing, making ships and turbines, railway locomotives, and, most famously, aircraft. Indeed, the company's first motorcycles were badged as Kawasaki Aircraft, which was a ballsy decision for a company with designs on US sales, given that the previous US contact with Kawasaki was Second World War fighter aircraft shooting at B29 bombers.

With Kawasaki's industrial muscle backing up the company with a substantial manufacturing skill base and lots of money, motorcycles became a flagship. Meguro had been building the Meguro K, a licensed-built version of the BSA A7 (details of the actual licensing deal are scant), which was a high-quality machine but had lubrication problems. Kawasaki absorbed Meguro completely in 1963. Kawasaki rebranded and redesigned it to sell as both a Meguro and as the Kawasaki K2, enlarged it to become the Meguro X-650, and then sold it as the Kawasaki W1.

Although it was the biggest motorcycle then made in Japan, in the days when a 650 was a superbike, the W1 was dated – and Kawasaki had bigger ambitions.

Japan was at the start of the 'Izanagi boom,' when Japan's economy grew enormously in a few years and caught up in this race for growth, Kawasaki was

ki H1 Mach III

inspired to develop a new product. This was called variously Project Blue Streak or Project N100.

Honda had recently introduced the four-stroke CB450 'Black Bomber' and Suzuki had made the two-stroke T500, both as fast and, importantly, more sophisticated than many British 650s. Kawasaki wanted some of this action.

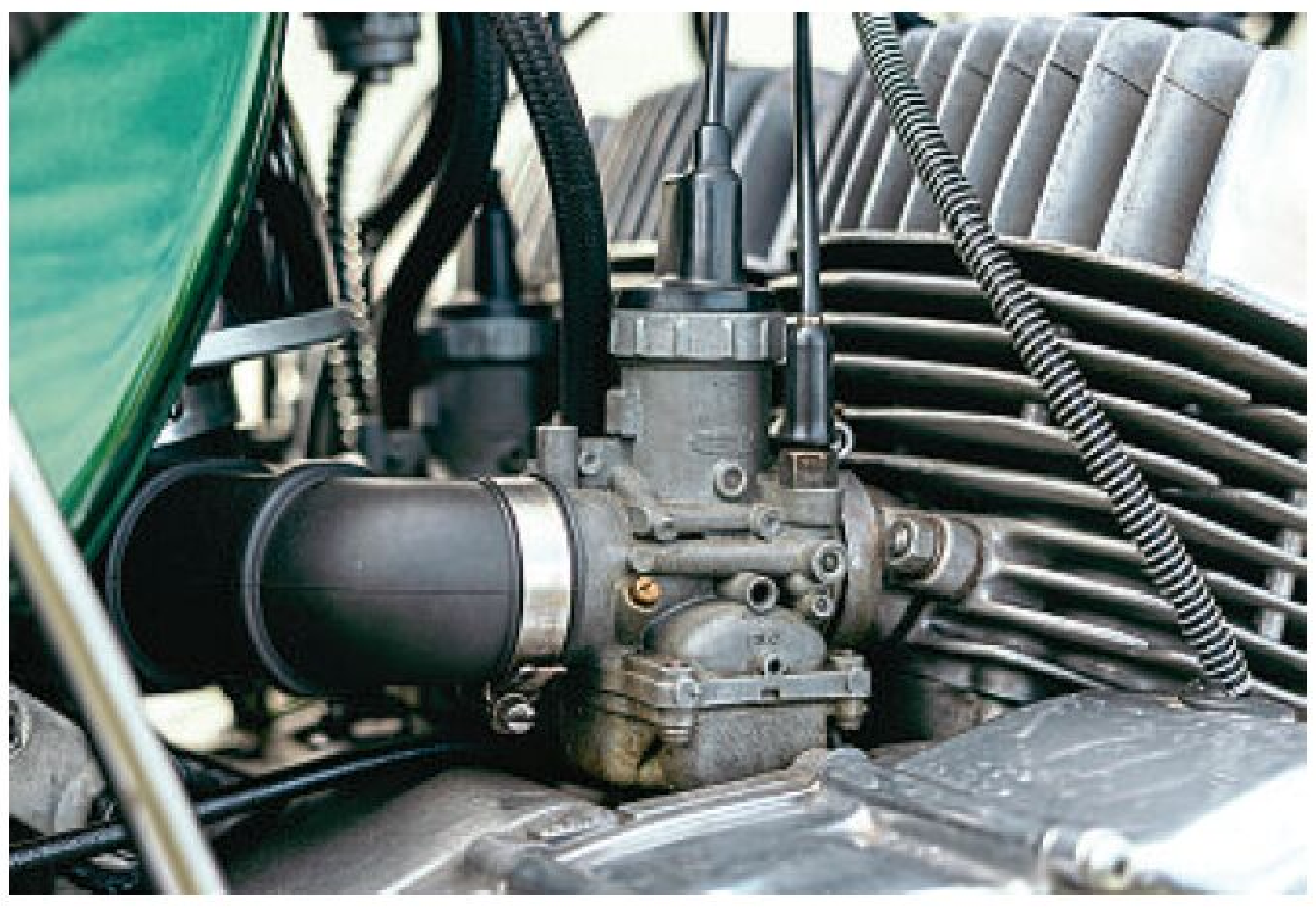
Although they had successful 250 and 350 twins, they realised that US buyers wanted bigger bikes, and that those buyers were frustrated at Harley-Davidson's ponderous models and the questionable build quality of some dated British designs. Kawasaki's response envisaged new high-performance motorcycle concept. Capacity wasn't the issue, but speed and power were. The specification for the N100 plan was to build a motorcycle with an engine that would produce 60bhp and provide a standing quarter time of 13 seconds.

The N100 plan was launched in February 1967 and work on the engine began in July. The engineers looked at two teams looking at engine concepts. These would either increase the bore of the existing disc-valve 350cc Avenger twin to make it into a 500 or build a completely new engine. For this new engine, they looked at building a two-stroke triple. At first, this was built in L-format, with a single-cylinder projecting from the front of the crankcase to help keep all three cylinders cool. Working with Osaka University's faculty of engineering, it was determined that a simpler inline configuration would not impair cooling. This simpler arrangement was the format chosen, as straight-forward piston porting on a triple was much cheaper than putting disc valves on a twin. The way a triple produced its power compared to a twin put less stress on the clutch and gearbox, which meant that in turn these components could be lighter and cheaper. Opting for piston porting meant that new motor was only an inch-and-a-half wider than a disc valve Avenger twin.

There were three carburettors, operated by individual cables running to a splitter that was controlled by a single throttle cable. A second cable on the twist crip controlled the 'Injectolube' two-stroke oiling system.

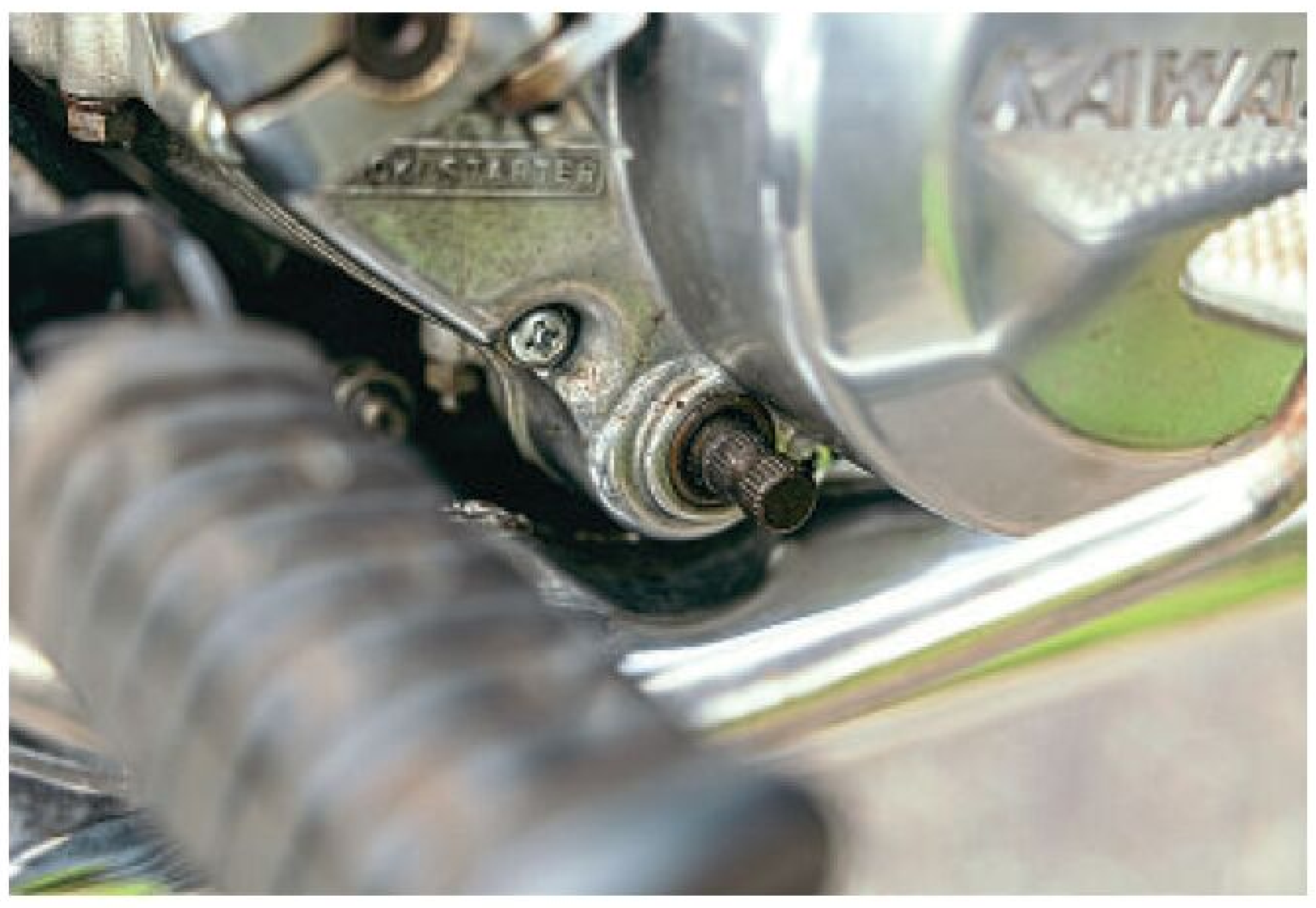
KAWASAKI
500
MACH III

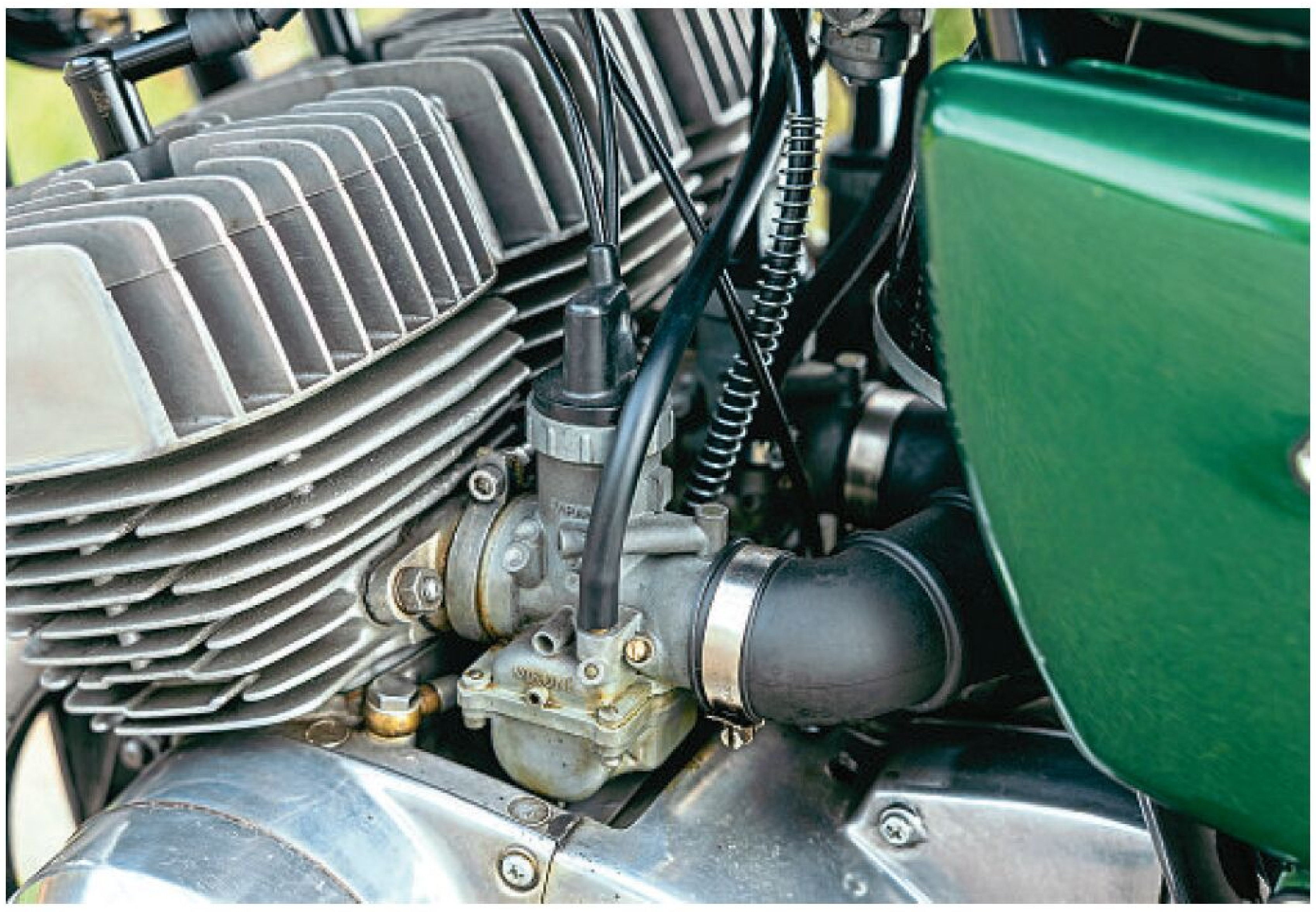
LIGHTS
ON · PO · OFF



A frame and cycle parts using many of Kawasaki's existing componentry was put together, a striking new look was created, and in September 1968 it announced that the new motorcycle, dubbed the H1 Mach III, would be coming very soon, having not just created an entirely new engine, but a whole new motorcycle from scratch in just over 12 months. Kawasaki test rider and feted drag racer Tony Nicosia rode the prototype on back roads around California, Utah, and Nevada in the cold winter of 1968. He claimed that the H1 was so stable he could ride it at night with his hands in his pockets. He put 650 miles on the prototype using two engines, and this 'seat of the pants' testing regime showed that two engines performed very differently – one very quiet, and the second "sounded like it was going to fly apart."

At a launch in the USA in February 1969, Kawasaki claimed the new triple ➡





SPECIFICATION

Engine: Air-cooled three-cylinder two-stroke **Capacity:** 498cc **Bore/stroke:** 60 x 58.5mm **Power (claimed):** 60bhp @ 7500rpm **Carburation:** 3 x 28mm Mikuni slides **Transmission:** Five-speed, wet clutch, chain final drive **Frame:** Tubular cradle **Suspension:** Telescopic forks/twin shock **Brakes:** 2LS front/SLS rear **Tyres/wheels:** 3.25x19, 4.00x18 **Weight:** 171kg Top speed (claimed)**:** 125mph

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INFORMATION

Dale's website contains huge amount of advice and information about buying, restoring, and running all Kawasaki triples and is an essential source of information: **HTTPS://KAWATRIPLE.COM/**

OWNERS' CLUB

The Kawasaki Triples club is an extremely enthusiastic and friendly organisation with 15 branches in the UK and organises several events each year: **KAWASAKITRIPLESCLUB.COM**

> ***"The H1 was a truly modern motorcycling creation, launched with CDI ignition, oil injection and intimidating handling, with breathtaking acceleration and top speed."***

had 60bhp, a top speed of 124mph, and would do 12.4 second standing quarters, making it one of the fastest production motorcycles ever made. This was treated with some cynicism by motorcycle journalists until independent road testers managed 119mph top speeds and 13.2 second quarters on test bikes.

Tony Nicosia took a production H1 Mach III across the USA on a tour of drag strips and he proved Kawasaki's claims had weight; the H1 really was that fast. Although Honda had stolen its thunder with the new CB750/4, the H1 was found to be the fastest mass production motorcycle available at the time in the USA. It was also cheap. The H1 cost $995 in the USA. By contrast, Triumph's T150 Trident, launched at the same time, was slower, and cost $1795.

The H1 was a perfect motorcycle for a country with long, straight roads and fast, wide boulevards.

The H1 was a truly modern motorcycling creation, launched with CDI ignition, oil injection and intimidating handling, with breathtaking acceleration and top speed. Power was taken from a roller-bearing crank to the transmission through a gear primary drive and sent to the back wheel by a five-speed constant mesh gearbox, one more gear than most riders were used to.

There was no electric start, but it was easy to kick over. It wasn't faultless, however. The CDI system was developed

from a system based on one used with some Kawasaki race bikes and it was not without its problems – it used a distributor that had a weak bearing that could fail. And while it was hugely fast in a straight line, if were there were no long, straight highways or dragstrip-style boulevards, things turned out a little differently.

The H1 – and some say all Japanese motorcycle culture at that time – was about the engine. But it had arrived with that fire-breathing engine wrapped in a frame of dubious design. Suffering from a poorly configured swingarm pivot made with indifferent manufacturing tolerances, the 500 Kawasaki had skinny front forks and frame tubes, an overly powerful and insensitive drum brake, and a set of shock absorbers from the 250 Samurai. Handling was clearly not top of the Kawasaki agenda. If you look at the frame of an early Kawasaki triple with modern eyes, you can see the root of the problems. The steering head is heavily braced, but it is not triangulated. The top strut heads backwards at a short, sharp angle, putting all the stress from the steering head in the middle of the top tubes right above the engine, instead of further back. That engine, meanwhile, was set rather further back in the frame partly to improve cooling to the middle cylinder, and this was less helpful for stable handling and badly affected the steering geometry on bends, while all the power came on at 6000rpm, making any journey and exhilarating, nay terrifying, experience. The frame would inevitably flex. Visitors to the factory where Kawasaki made the frames reported that they were made by welding two sides of the frame together, rather than constructed as a single unit.

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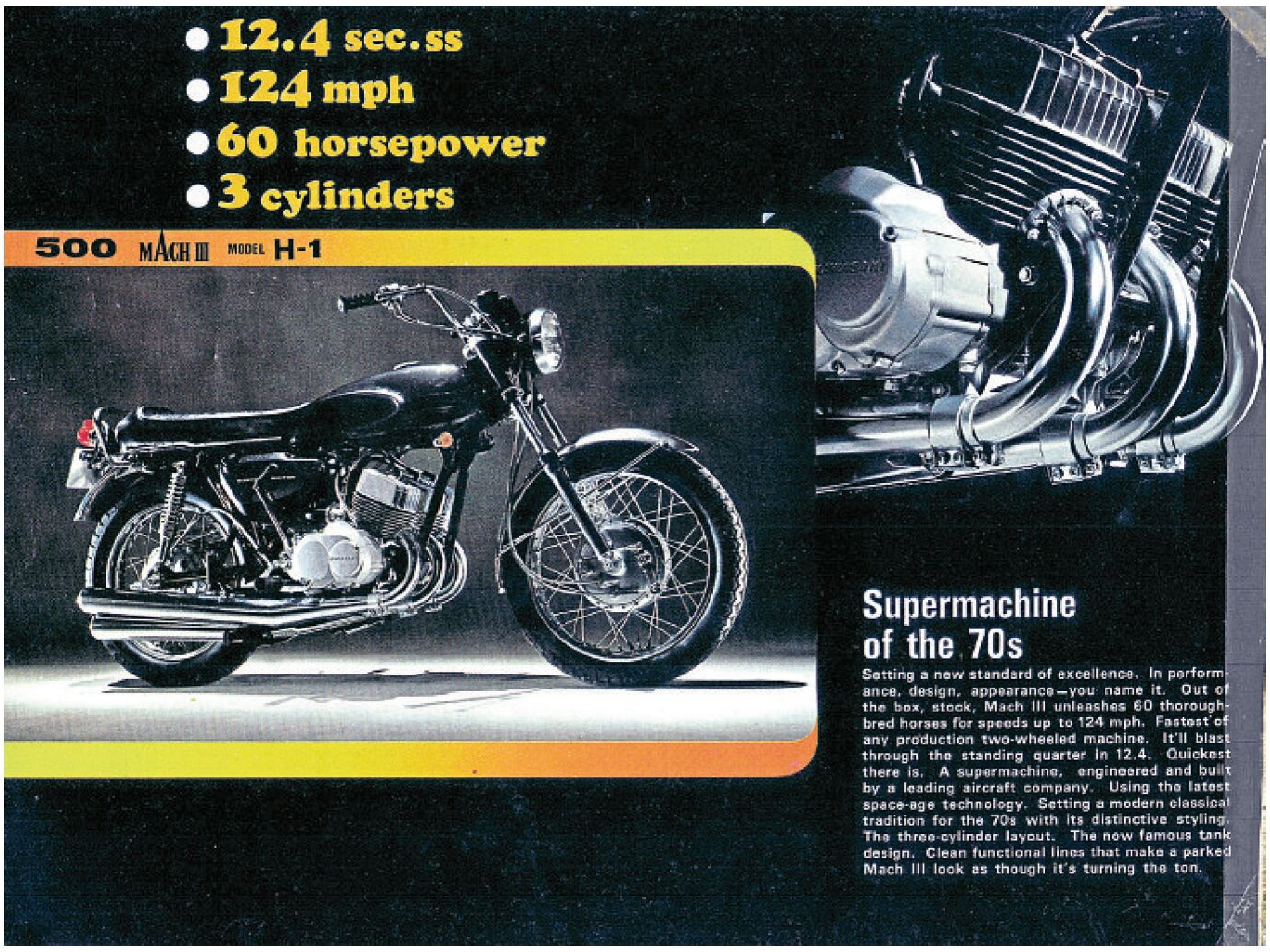
KAWASAKI
500
MACH III

KAWASAKI
500
MACH III



- 12.4 sec.ss
- 124 mph
- 60 horsepower
- 3 cylinders

500 MACH III MODEL H-1

Supermachine of the 70s

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Kawasaki had built a motorcycle in which power was everything and there was no consideration for handling and therefore safety, while respect for the environment from the 24mpg machine and respectability was not part of the equation. Yet racing versions won Grand Prix in the startling livery that became Kawasaki Green.

The different responses to the H1 in the USA and the UK were marked. American journalists given the machine in a balmy Californian spring of 1969 raved about the power, declared the tyres to be wonderful, the handling positive and the whole package a work of genius. Over in dear old Blighty later that year, where the streets were potholed (no change there), where there were still cobbled streets in the inner cities, and where the roads were wet and oil-slicked and had actual bends, the praise for the handling was more muted. For once, the high and wide handlebars were deemed essential for effective steering, rather than a transatlantic fad.

> ***"For once, the high and wide handlebars were deemed essential for effective steering, rather than a transatlantic fad."***

The big drum brake was either on or off and faded rapidly in hard use going into UK bends, giving a new terror/excitement to scratching, with many machines ending up on grass verges or worse, while the Japanese Dunlop K70 tyres fitted as standard were notoriously bad on any bike. And, like the brakes, the carburation meant the engine likewise had two settings: on or off.

The triple might have been exciting, but it didn't take long for sales to be hit by the H1's unpredictability on the road, and Kawasaki was faced by a triple whammy of too much power, threats of legal action for product liability, and rapidly increasing emissions regulations. The power was dialled back in stages over the years from the alleged 60bhp to about 52bhp, which was still remarkable for a 500. Over the years there were improvements to frame design, too. A new front disc helped create a slightly more manageable reputation but did not dilute the legend too much. Yet this reputation for being a hair-raising sportster did affect sales and the H1 was rejected by many buyers for the 'exhilarating' handling, thirst, and peaky power delivery, while Kawasaki took the wind out of its own sales by launching the even more extreme H2 750 triple.

However, in the early years, the H1 simply obliterated the competition, making the bike a legend. Rivals such as the Honda 450cc 45bhp Black Bomber or Triumph's 500 Daytona with 40bhp were simply blown into the weeds. They were left as a distant speck in your rear-view mirrors.

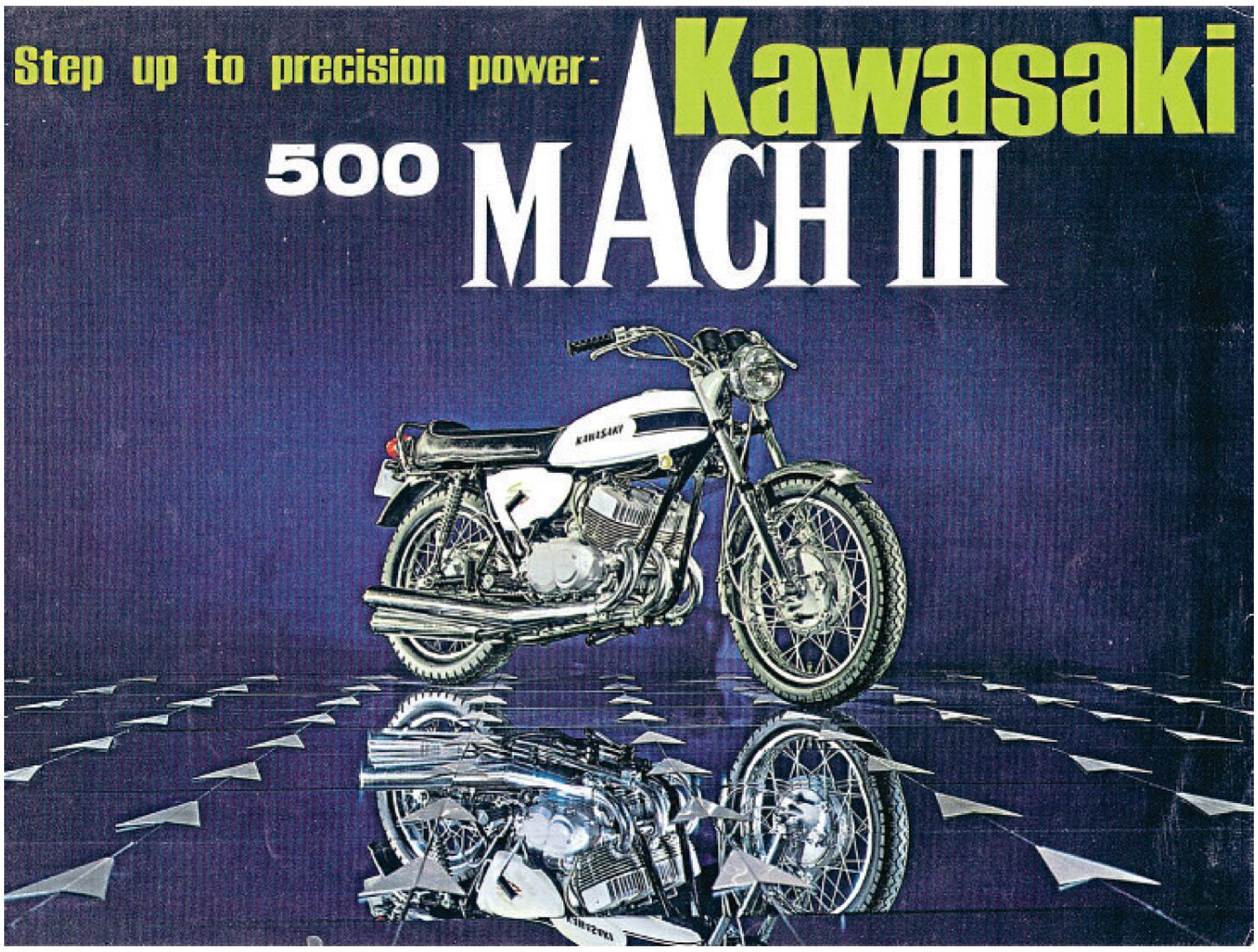
The models

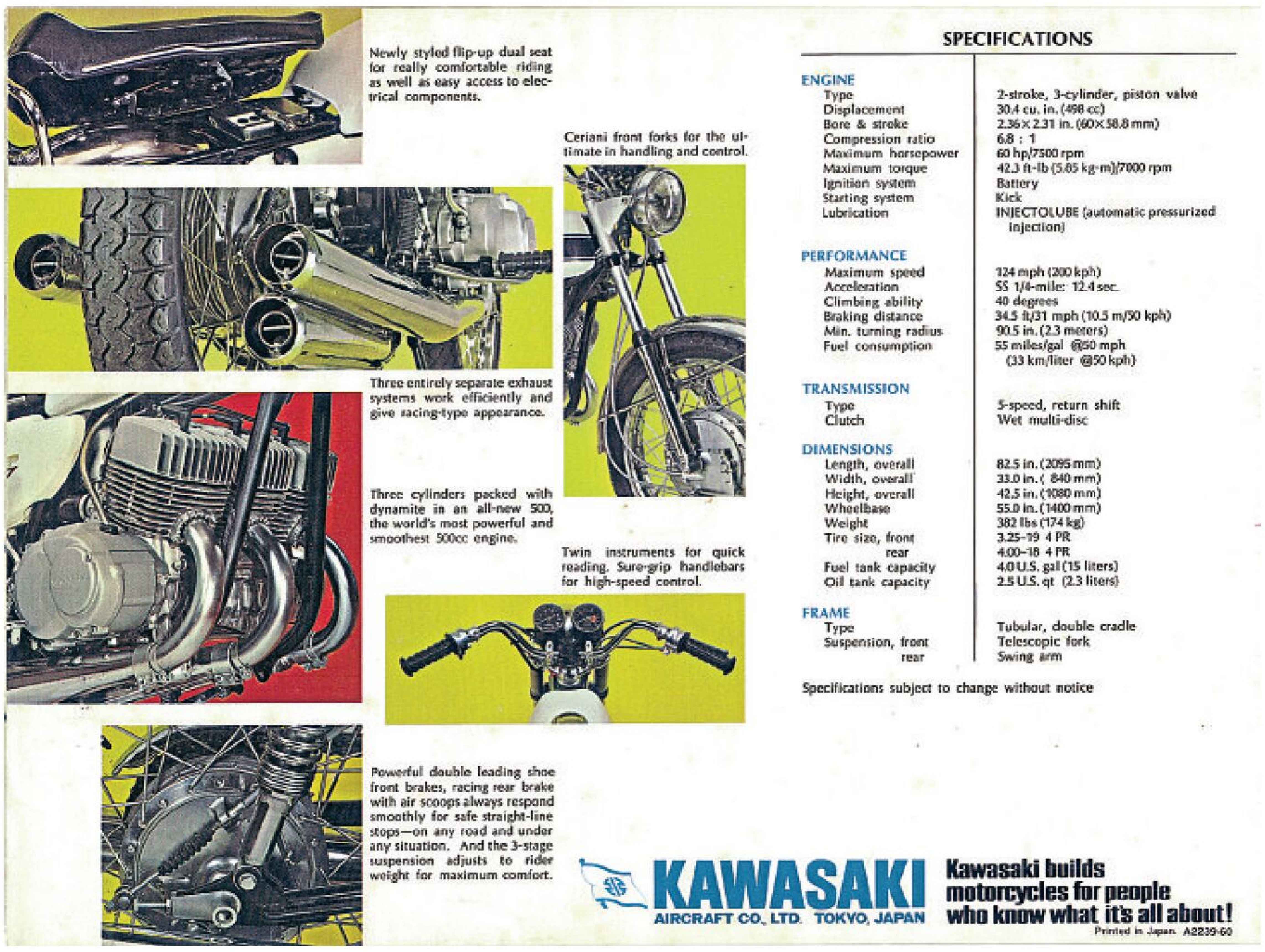
Kawasaki offered new versions of the H1 every year, with technological upgrades, new paint schemes, and cosmetic changes.

1969 H1 Mach III: The fixed capacitor discharge ignition was ground-breaking, if primitive, and there was the twin leading shoe front drum brake. The gearbox was five-up, with neutral at the bottom, and you could swap round the gearshift from right to left should you desire it if you were used to British or Italian shift patterns. The tank featured deep knee scallops and there were Mach III badges. Few 1969 models came to the UK as Kawasaki did not have an official importer at the time, but plenty have since, as grey imports.

1970 H1-500: Changes for 1970 were mostly cosmetic, with changes to the paint scheme and trim. More of these bikes arrived in the UK with the appointment of an official importer Agrati. The principal difference between UK and US bikes was the use of points, rather than the new-fangled CDI set-up. This was down to GPO, which regulated radio and TV broadcasts

> **“It started first kick, as one might expect from a well-presented two-stroke. Remembering the all-up gearchange, I gently pootled off down a lane, waiting to be eaten alive.”**





Newly styled flip-up dual seat for really comfortable riding as well as easy access to electrical components.

Ceriani front forks for the ultimate in handling and control.

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Three cylinders packed with dynamite in an all-new 500, the world's most powerful and smoothest 500cc engine.

Twin instruments for quick reading. Sure-grip handlebars for high-speed control.

Powerful double leading shoe front brakes, racing rear brake with air scoops always respond smoothly for safe straight-line stops—on any road and under any situation. And the 3-stage suspension adjusts to rider weight for maximum comfort.

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	
Type	2-stroke, 3-cylinder, piston valve
Displacement	30.4 cu. in. (498 cc)
Bore & stroke	2.36×2.31 in. (60×58.8 mm)
Compression ratio	6.8 : 1
Maximum horsepower	60 hp/7500 rpm
Maximum torque	42.3 ft-lb (5.85 kg-m)/7000 rpm
Ignition system	Battery
Starting system	Kick
Lubrication	INJECTOLUBE (automatic pressurized injection)
PERFORMANCE	
Maximum speed	124 mph (200 kph)
Acceleration	SS 1/4-mile: 12.4 sec.
Climbing ability	40 degrees
Braking distance	34.5 ft/31 mph (10.5 m/50 kph)
Min. turning radius	90.5 in. (2.3 meters)
Fuel consumption	55 miles/gal @50 mph (33 km/liter @50 kph)
TRANSMISSION	
Type	5-speed, return shift
Clutch	Wet multi-disc
DIMENSIONS	
Length, overall	82.5 in. (2095 mm)
Width, overall	33.0 in. (840 mm)
Height, overall	42.5 in. (1080 mm)
Wheelbase	55.0 in. (1400 mm)
Weight	382 lbs (174 kg)
Tire size, front	3.25–19 4 PR
rear	4.00–18 4 PR
Fuel tank capacity	4.0 U.S. gal (15 liters)
Oil tank capacity	2.5 U.S. qt (2.3 liters)
FRAME	
Type	Tubular, double cradle
Suspension, front	Telescopic fork
rear	Swing arm

Specifications subject to change without notice

KAWASAKI
AIRCRAFT CO., LTD. TOKYO, JAPAN

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Printed in Japan. A2239-60

and found that that the CDI ignition would interfere with TV and radio signals.

1971 H1A-500: The tank lost its scallops, which was not just a shame, as they were very attractive, but a pain for those who like to restore to standard. Finding the earlier tank isn’t quite on the level of hunting for the holy grail, but close to it.

1972 H1B/C-500: A new paint scheme became the Kawasaki standard look for a few years. There were further trim changes, painted mudguards, more colour-matching and polished engine casings and there were changes to the instruments and other equipment. Most significant was the use of a disc brake at the front. This was better than the drum and a hydraulic steering damper was added on top of the existing friction damper. The silencers and airbox were modified to make things slightly less antisocial, which cut power. But everybody fitted expansion chambers, anyway. The H1-C was a rare parts bin special model with a front drum brake and a white paint job. The H1B is probably the most attractive model today, as it had many of the earlier bugs ironed out but still retained the authentic triple feel.

1973 H1-D: 1973 triples got some much need modifications to handling and further reductions in power. More colour options saw the adoption of Kawasaki Green, there were more mods to the silencers, which became a connected unit instead of three separate pipes, there were frame changes, moving the engine slightly forwards, and the central friction damper was removed and a heftier hydraulic unit offered. There were better shocks and the CDI unit was reintroduced in the UK having been changed to the unit used on the H2 750.

1974 H1E: Changes were limited to a further revision of the CDI system, some engine breathing mods and slight alterations to the trim as efforts were made to make the H1 more respectable. It also got anti vibration rubber engine mounts. The H1E is probably the easiest H1 model to live with.

1975 H1F: Largely unchanged from the E model apart from minor changes to trim, austerity was starting to bite as side panel badges were changed to stickers. The H1 moniker was subsequently dropped and replaced with the slower, less powerful, and thus less charismatic 52bhp KH500 which had H1F engine and frame numbers. The KH lasted until 1977 when Kawasaki headed for DOHC in-line four territory with the Z650 four taking over the middleweight sportsbike role.

Despite, or perhaps because of, gaining a macho reputation for unpredictable, hairy-chested behaviour combined with the all-conquering straight-line performance, the Kawasaki triple concept survived as a 250 and 400 in the line-up until the early 1980s, by which time it was an anachronistic and glorious throwback to the days of flares and patchouli.

Riding an H1

The H1 comes with that fearsome reputation, but what is it like to ride?

Classic Motorcycles Ltd of Cheshire (see its advert on the back page of this very magazine) had a late-model H1 in stock from 1976 for a reasonable £8999 and kindly let me have a ride on the allegedly unrideable monster. Now, by ’76, the H1 was toned down a little and substantial changes had been made to the frame and braking. It looked fab in Kawasaki Green and it had a stance to die for.

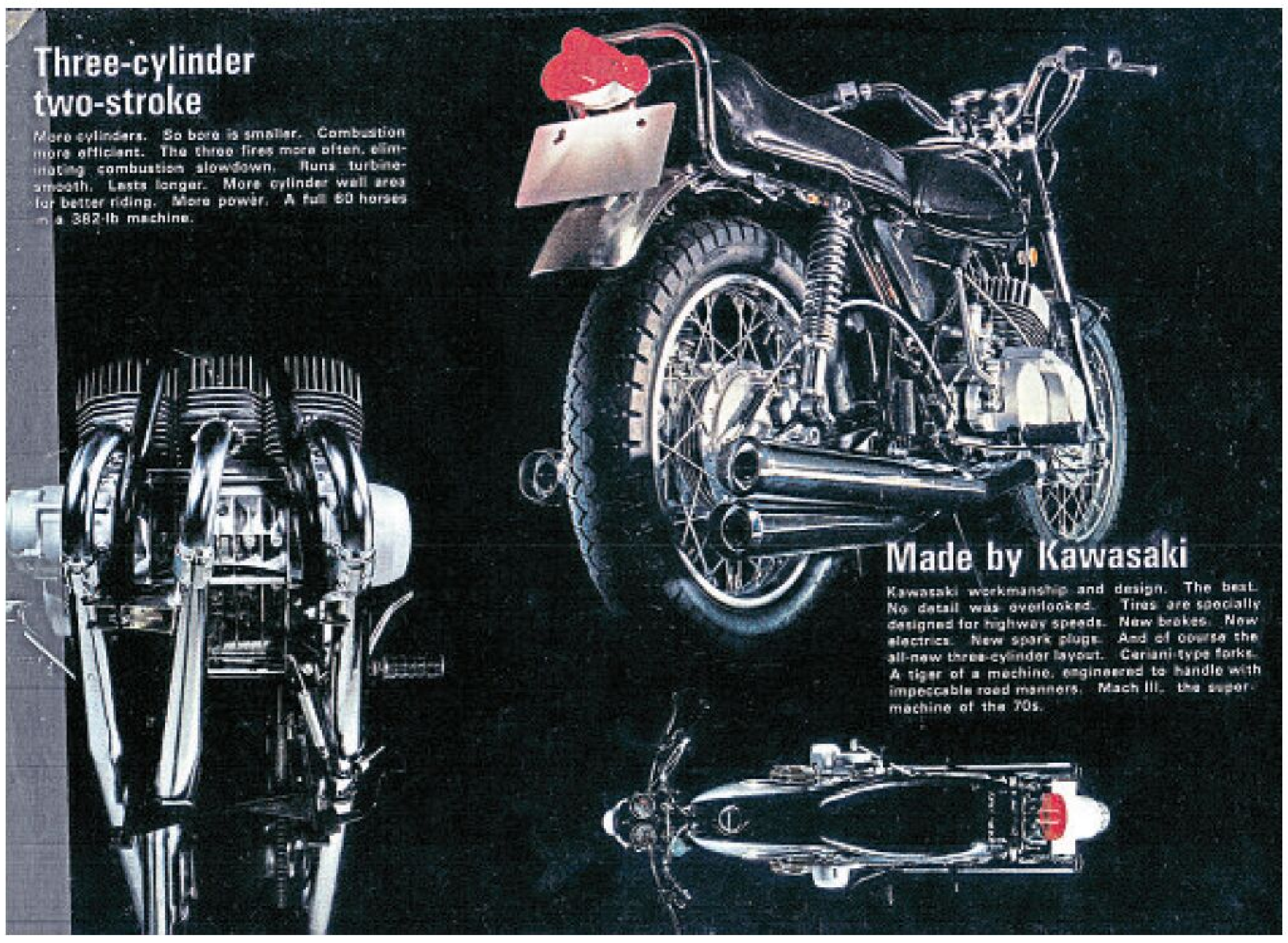
Okay, so time to get to grips with this terrifying behemoth. It started first kick, as one might expect from a well-presented ➡

he 500 MACH III (Model H-1)

12.4 sec (111.6 mph)
I's record as certified by the NHRA
—unbelievable 2 hp per cubic inch
of power and style
months/12,000 miles

It is the fastest ¼ - mile production motorcycle in the world, regardless of size!

KAWASAKI
500



Three-cylinder two-stroke

More cylinders. So bore is smaller. Combustion more efficient. The three fires more often, eliminating combustion slowdown. Runs turbine-smooth. Lasts longer. More cylinder wall area for better riding. More power. A full 60 horses in a 382-lb machine.

Made by Kawasaki

Kawasaki workmanship and design. The best. No detail was overlooked. Tires are specially designed for highway speeds. New brakes. New electrics. New spark plugs. And of course the all-new three-cylinder layout. Ceriani-type forks. A tiger of a machine, engineered to handle with impeccable road manners. Mach III, the super-machine of the 70s.

two-stroke. Remembering the all-up gearchange, I gently pootled off down a lane, waiting to be eaten alive.

I got to a junction and took it down to first, by now having completely forgotten that neutral was at the bottom, and I slipped the clutch to accelerate and got nothing but a big noise from the silencers and a momentary wobble. Oh, yes. Up into first. It wasn't the first time this happened, as muscle memory always expected a gearbox to go into first at the bottom. It is odd, as I can always switch happily from left to right shift, and even down for up, but this aspect the Kawasaki remained confusing all throughout our brief relationship. The last thing you want to do in slow traffic is suddenly find yourself with no go.

Then I forgot to turn the fuel on and reached down for the fuel tap… only it wasn't there. It wasn't on the right either. I had to get off and rummage around under the tank until I found it, mounted in the middle, and I'm not sure what the designers were thinking when they did that. Still, fuel on, boot it over, and we are ready to roll again. Up into first, rev gently to 2500rpm, give it a bit more throttle, and suddenly things started to happen very fast; hello, baby, what is going on here? It was utterly invigorating, though thankfully not uncontrollably so. The much-vaunted terrible handling turned out to be a myth, at least on this later model, the H1 went smoothly through corners, and I could chuck it about with something close to aplomb. There was no footpeg scraping or anything close to that – I'm not into that sort of nonsense. It was just a joyful, full-of-beans romp. There was no wobble, no ridiculousness, and the acceleration, while dramatic, was far from being uncontrollable. I can imagine that giving it big handfuls might have made things more exhilarating. Otherwise, my criticisms are limited to the switchgear being a bit rubbish and the seat a little firm for my aging posterior.

I was left wishing that these bikes were not quite so legendary, and thus expensive, so more people could enjoy them.

How much?

If you are looking for a H1 today, you will need deep pockets. Most are imports, and a restoration project that is mostly complete but will need a ground up rebuild to work properly will start at about £4000-£5000. Remember, a project is likely to require an enormous amount of work, and specialist mechanics and restorers are thin on the ground. You can find a runner with a few scuffs and scrapes for £7000-£9000, while polished show quality bikes cost between £9000 and £12,000.

While early bikes used to command the highest prices, these days even a late 1976 model in top-notch condition with set you back £11,000.

Kawasaki Triple fans have their personal favourites, and the bikes from the first three or four years are the most striking in appearance, but it should be remembered that bits for the early models are going to be hardest to find, while Kawasaki setting up its own UK import department in 1974 improved supply of both parts and bikes. The later models had better equipment too. CBG

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November Diary

There are not an enormous amount of outdoor meets this month, as you might imagine, but there are a handful of jumbles and December's Kempton Show to look forward to, and Motorcycle Live certainly looks like a good one, as when you are tired of looking at shiny new bikes and have collected enough keyrings and leaflets, it's an opportunity to pop across the M42 and visit the National Motorcycle Museum.

NOVEMBER

- **1** ***OLD BIKE MART*** **WITH YOU TODAY**
- **1 Rufforth Autojumble:** Rufforth Park, Yorks YO23 3QH
- **2 Ton-Up Day + 59 Club:** Ace Café, Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge Park, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com
- **3NOVEMBER ISSUE OF *REAL CLASSIC* OUT NOW**
- **6-9 EICMA, Milan:** One of the biggest motorcycle shows in the world, and one to follow online, especially if you want to see what the new Nortons look like www.eicma.it/en/
- **7 DECEMBER ISSUE OF *THE CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE* OUT NOW**
- **9 Poppy Day Parade and Service:** Military vehicle meet, Ace Café, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com
- **15 Scorton Auto and Bike Jumble:** North Yorkshire Events Centre, Scorton, near Richmond, DL10 6EJ. Tel: Bert 07909 904705.
- **15-23 Motorcycle Live, NEC Birmingham:** The UK's biggest showcase of new motorcycles and products now includes The Heritage Zone, presented by The National Motorcycle Museum, which will display a celebration dedicated to the 80th anniversary of VE Day, with 10 highly notable bikes from the last eight decades on display, including a First World War Clyno Machine Gun Sidecar and a Second World War Norton 16H. NEC Birmingham, B40 1NT; just off the M42. Admission from £25.
- **16 Langport Bike Night:** Autumn Sunday meet, 11am-2pm, Bere Cider, Bere Cider Farm, off the A372, just outside Aller TA10 0QX.
- **16 'Normous Newark Autojumble:** Newark Showground, Notts NG24 2NY. www.autojumble.info
- **16 Bike Day:** Ace Café, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.comm
- **19 DECEMBER ISSUE OF *CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE MECHANICS* OUT NOW**
- **23 Ariel OC Founders Day and Classic Bike Day:** Ace Café, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com
- **26 DECEMBER ISSUE OF *CLASSIC BIKE GUIDE* ON SALE NOW**
- **30 Mud Pluggers Day:** Ace Café, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com
- **30 Santa Toy Ride:** Supporting Cash for Kids Mission Christmas. Bring a new, unwrapped toy and drop it off from 10am at the entrance of the Sammy Miller Museum, Bashley Cross Roads, New Milton, Hampshire BH25 5SZ.

DECEMBER

- **1 DECEMBER ISSUE OF *REAL CLASSIC* OUT NOW**
- **5 JANUARY ISSUE OF *THE CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE* IS OUT NOW**
- **6** ***OLD BIKE MART*** **WITH YOU TODAY**
- **6 Kempton Classic Bike Show and Autojumble:** Kempton Park Racecourse, Kempton TW16 5AQ. www.autojumble.info
- **6 Rufforth Autojumble:** Rufforth Park, Yorks YO23 3QH
- **7 Bike Day and Ace Cafe Club Day Xmas Meet:** Ace Café, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com
- **14 Xmas Toy Run:** Ace Café, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com
- **14 Xmas Carol Service:** Ace Café, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com
- **17 JANUARY ISSUE OF *CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE MECHANICS* IS OUT NOW**
- **18 YOUR JANUARY/FEBRUARY ISSUE OF *CLASSIC RACER* IS OUT NOW**
- **20 Scorton Auto and Bike Jumble:** North Yorkshire Events Centre, Scorton, near Richmond, DL10 6EJ. Tel: Bert 07909 904705.
- **21 Bike Day:** Ace Café, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com
- **24 JANUARY ISSUE OF *CLASSIC BIKE GUIDE* IS ON SALE NOW**
- **26 'Cold Turkey' Meet:** Ace Café, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com
- **28 Bike Day:** Ace Café, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com
- **29 Langport Bike Night:** Post-Christmas meet, 11am-2pm, Bere Cider, Bere Cider Farm, off the A372, just outside Aller TA10 0QX.

Would you like your event, bike night, or gathering to appear in these listings? Let us know at least six weeks in advance by emailing **editor@classicbikeguide.com**

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WHAT'S COMING UP IN THE AUTOJUMBLE CALENDAR?

'NORMOUS NEWARK AUTOJUMBLE
NEWARK SHOWGROUND, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE, NG24 2NY
NOV 16, 2025
JAN 26, 2026
• ADVANCE TICKETS ON SALE NOW
• STANDARD ADVANCE (FROM 10:00AM) - £6
• EARLY BIRD ADVANCE (FROM 8:00AM) - £9
• UNDER 16S FREE
newarkautojumble.co.uk

Kempton AUTOJUMBLE
KEMPTON PARK, MIDDLESEX, TW16 5AQ
OCT 25, 2025
DEC 6, 2025
• ADVANCE TICKETS ON SALE NOW
• STANDARD ADVANCE (FROM 9:30AM) - £6
• EARLY BIRD ADVANCE (FROM 8:00AM) - £9
• UNDER 16S FREE
kemptonautojumble.co.uk

STRATFORD AUTOJUMBLE
STRATFORD-UPON-AVON RACECOURSE, WARWICKSHIRE, CV37 9SE
MAY 10, 2026
• ADVANCE TICKETS ON SALE NOW
• ADULT ADVANCE - £5
• UNDER 16S FREE
stratfordautojumble.co.uk

AUTOJUMBLE.INFO

Old bike mechanics Directory

Your guide to those who are willing to help us!

THIS IS A UK DIRECTORY OF mechanics and engineers happy to work on our older bikes. Bikes with points and carburettors, as an example. Let us know who is out there, who you trust, because no mechanics means no assistance, which means we'll be stuck looking at our stationary bikes in the shed thinking of the good ol' days… Let us know at editor@classicbikeguide.com

- **TAKE 2 Motorcycles, Unit 5, Test Valley Business Centre, Test Lane, Nursling, Southampton. 0238 0863295 or 0238 0860356.** Happy to work on any older motorcycles!
- **Renaissance Motor Cycle Workshops, Addingham, West Yorkshire. 07759 724123** Motorcycle learn about and work on your own bike with Roger – and you don't even need a bike!
- **Engineering Services, near Norwich, Norfolk. 01603 759508 / jdebohun@gmail.com** Jon excels in BMWs, electrics, thread cutting, CAD design and projects..
- **RiE-Store, near Brighton, West Sussex. 07741 261851 / rie-store.com** Ash and the guys know their early American bikes, as well as their British machines.
- **Robin James Engineering Services, Leominster, Herefordshire. 01568 612800** The team here offer all the services needed on classic cars and bikes.
- **AJ's Motorcycles, Hull, East Yorkshire. 07786 165335** Tony can do it all, from two-stroke to four, superbike to tiddlers, restoration and fabrication.
- **Mike Lingard, Knott End, Lancashire. 07526 922771** Brake drum skimming, disc grinding, helicoiling, turning, milling and even casting.
- **Ian Perry, near Hinckley, Leicestershire. 07954 601481** Ian is a very skilled welder specialising in aluminium, and also offers vapor blasting
- **KRF Motorcycles, near Norwich, Norfolk. 07501 275345** Kev has spent his life working on BMWs, has all the tools, and gives BMW Club members a discount.
- **Ray Petty Mechannica, Greenwich, London. 0208 8538002 / ray@raypettymechannica.com** Lots of recommendations for Ray; early Ducati and Italian makes mostly, and great atmosphere.
- **Mike Taylor, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire. 07922 838228 / picknmixtaylor@hotmail.com** Mike specialises in Triumph/BSA triples, and is happy to work on much else, full rebuilds included.
- **Northants Classic Bikes, Rushden, Northamptonshire. 01933 355525** Steve and Julie offer classic sales, parts, and workshop expertise for all classics.
- **Mick Surmann Motorcycles Ltd, Bierton, Aylesbury. 01296 486137** Proper old-fashioned bike shop, from flat tankers to modern bikes, with MoT station.
- **Brooks Engineering, Northwich, Cheshire. 01606 47008 / brookesengineering.co.uk** It has all the equipment necessary for turning, machining, welding and so on, removing broken studs etc.
- **Oak Lea Performance, Pilling, Lancashire. 07930 306009** Geoff does repairs, servicing and restorations, and custom-made exhaust systems are a speciality.
- **Kustom Choppers Ltd, Hingham, Norfolk. 01953 529150 / info@kustomchoppers.co.uk** Daniel works on all older bikes, from servicing and restoration to custom work.
- **Howard Evans, Barton-upon-Humber, North Lincolnshire. 07788 501168** Repair, restoration of classic Japanese bikes, also vapour blasting and carburettor restoration.
- **Max Smeed Restorations, South Manchester. 07307 877781 / max@max-restorations.co.uk** Max is a mechanical engineer and MoT tester, covering all types of jobs on all bikes.
- **Matt's Machine Shop, Abercynon, South Wales. 01443 742791** Works on all kinds of bikes, specialises in imperial British and American, and has a dyno.
- **Wilsons Motorcycles, Kirton, Lincolnshire. 01205 724314 / sales@wilsonsmotorcycles.co.uk** Just outside Boston, Wilsons can work on any motorcycle and has run highly successful race teams.
- **Motorcycle Service Centre, 541 Harrow Road, London, W10 4RH. 0208 9606434** Robbie looks after a huge array of classics in the West London area.
- **HTE motorcycles, near Swaffham, Norfolk. 01328 700711** Hutch specialises in classics and British bikes repairs, projects, wheel-building and engines.
- **RJ Motorcycles, Coalville, North Leicestershire. 01530 833297 / info@rjmotorcycles.co.uk** Always ready to help and will sell one O ring if that's all you need.
- **SRS Engineering, Sutton. 0208 6425685 / srsengineeringsutton.com** Mike can do rebores, machining, head skimming, anything old-school motor engineering.
- **Specialist Welding Service, Banstead. 07957 557935 / specialistweldingservices.co.uk** Andy is a time-served welder capable of the most intricate work on fins, heads and cases.
- **Red Dragon Refinishing, Rhostyllen, Cheshire, near Wrexham. 01978 448983 / wayne@rdwales.com** Blasting, plating, powder-coating and painting are just part of what Red Dragon can do.
- **Wells Forest Classics, near Peterhead, Aberdeenshire. 07766 727924 / scottymcb3@gmail.com** Scotty McBride specialises with Royal Enfield and Moto Guzzi but is happy to look at all makes.
- **Angus Classic Bikes, Forfar, Angus, Scotland. 01307 463838 / www.angusclassicbikes.co.uk** Happy to work on any type of bike, fit tyres, MoT, clean carbs and vapour blast.
- **Bob Grant Motorcycles, Pitscottie, Fife. 01334 829415** Service and repairs, parts, suspension, dyno tuning, vapour blasting, and restoration.
- **Barrie Brown Wheel Building, Windygates, Fife. 01333 352102 / 07711 916722** Complete wheel-building, blasting and restoration service available for any make.
- **Engine Resource Dundee, Dundee. 01382 223686 / engineresource.co.uk** Nearly 50 years of engine remanufacturing and auto engineering.
- **Sandy Bloy's classic repair garage, Perth. 07772 249309** Sandy specialises in classic sales, repairs, parts, and total classic restoration services.
- **Dynotech Ecosse, Hillington, Glasgow. 07779 159065 / dynotechecosse.com** Modern bikes and classics are welcome for routine to total restoration and dyno tuning.
- **Steelworx Motorcycles, Wishaw, Lanarkshire. 07710 753912** Steelworx is known for custom builds, but just as happy doing general repairs and servicing.
- **The VOC Vincent Spares Company Ltd, near Kettering. 01536 312220 / vincentspares.co.uk** Vincent spares in stock, repairs, rebuilds, and a selection of bikes for sale.

CBG

Your guide to...

Italian siblings

What are the chances any of us ever getting to ride not one, but two wonderful and rare MV Agustas, back to back? Roland Brown did – and rubs our nose in it by telling how wonderful they were...

Lucky, lucky words by Roland Brown, with **photography by** Phil Masters

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CRC
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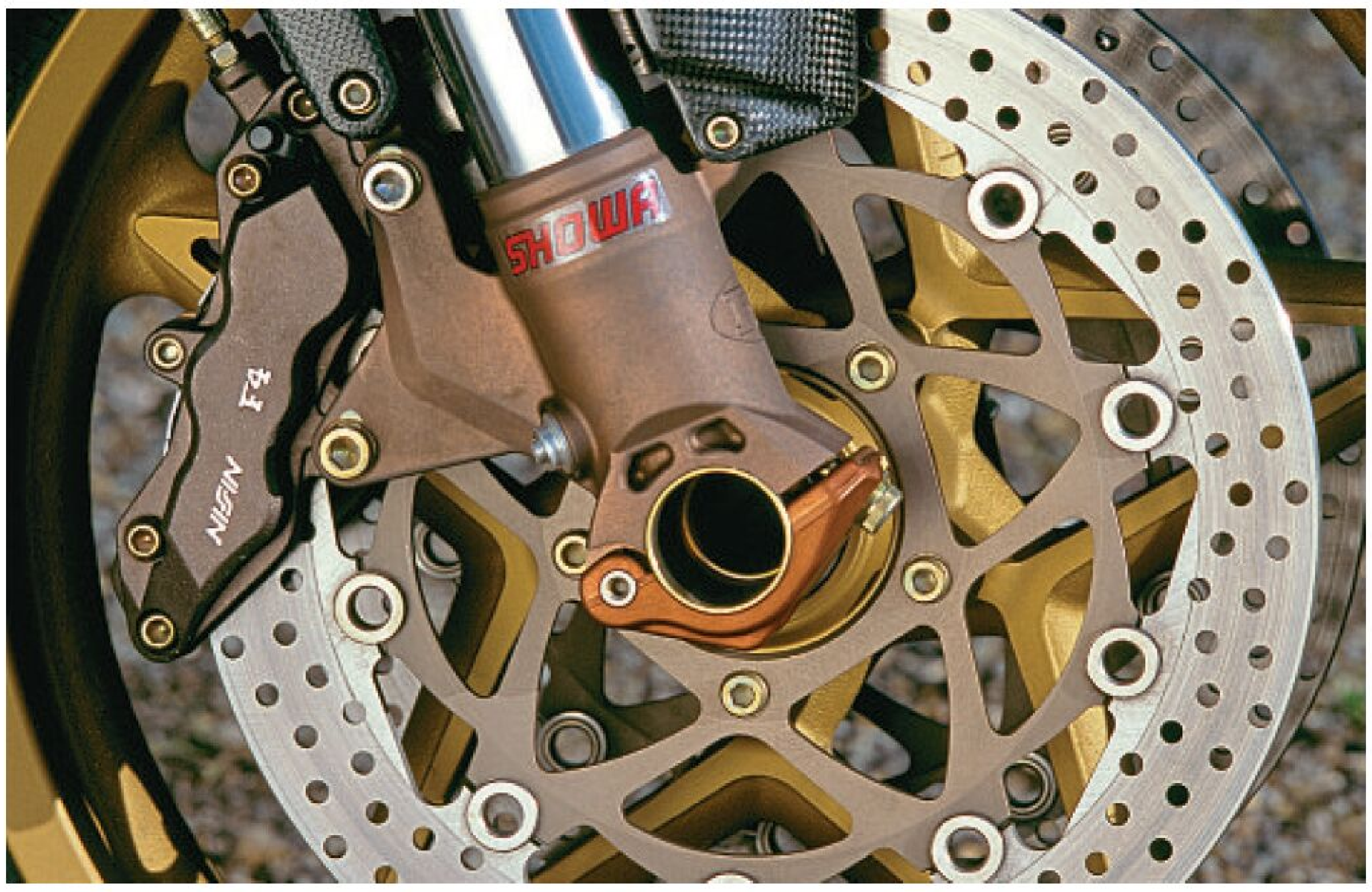


ALMOST 30 YEARS SEPARATED MV Agusta's 750 Sport of the 1970s from its 21st century descendant, the 750 F4 Serie Oro.

They made a mighty handsome couple, the racy four-cylinder machine that established MV Agusta as a superbike manufacturer on its launch at the Milan show in 1969 and the limited-edition four with which the famous old marque was spectacularly reborn at the same venue in 1997.

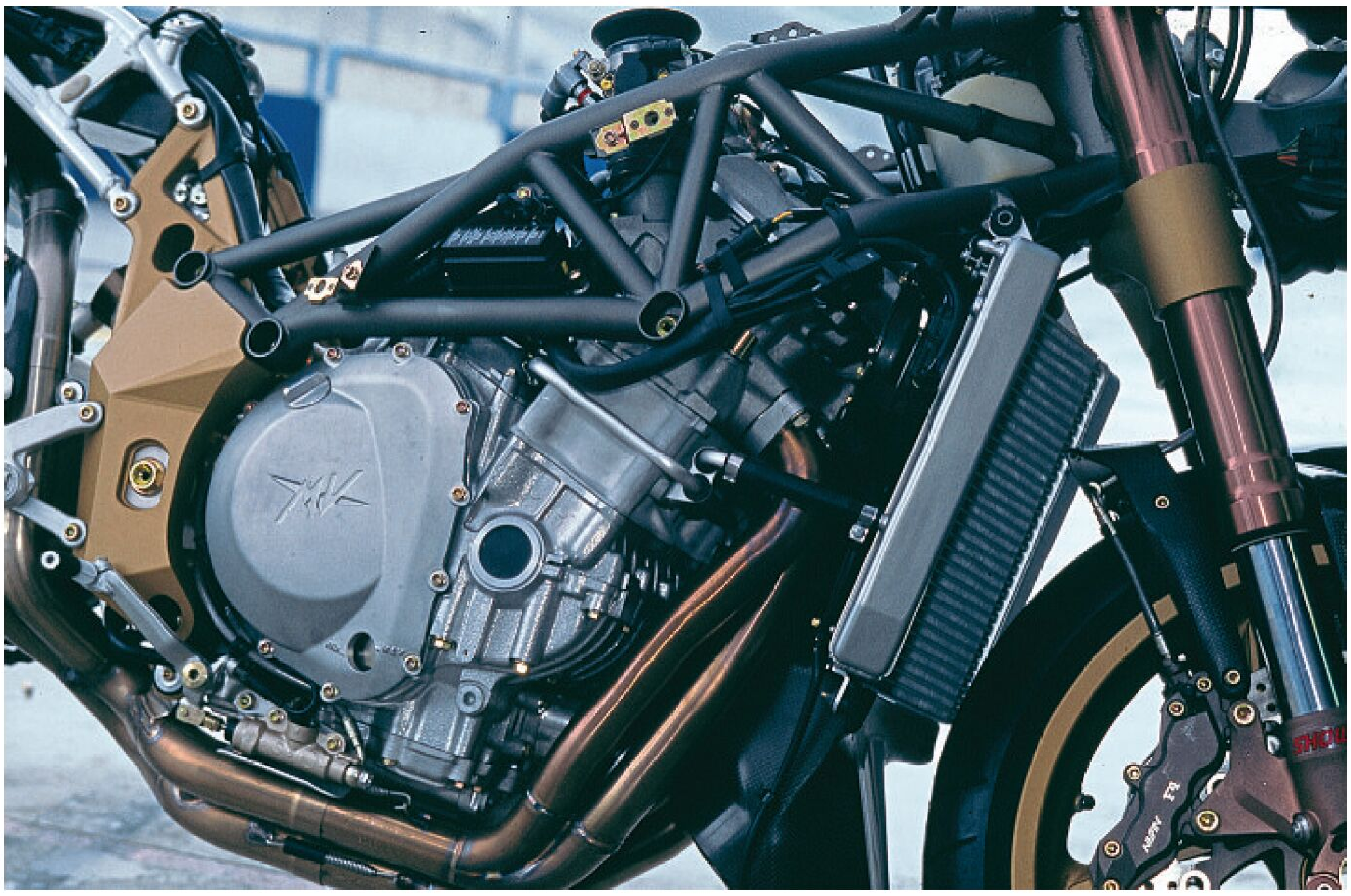
My chance to ride both bikes came in 2001 thanks to the generosity of their owner, the late Alan Elderton. The then chairman of the MV Agusta Owners' Club, who sadly died in 2009, was a quietly spoken and hugely knowledgeable marque fanatic. His garage contained numerous classic MVs, most of them small-capacity models in various states of repair.

Having persuaded Alan to let me ride his 750 Sport, I arrived at his house in Kent and was surprised to see the nearly-new F4 Serie Oro standing next to it. I hadn't known he'd managed to secure one of the limited run of 300 Gold Series bikes with which MV had belatedly begun F4 production. And my jaw nearly hit the floor when Alan, leathers on and helmet in hand, held out two keys and asked: "Which one d'you want to take first?"

Family format

Parked side by side before we set off, the pair of MVs perfectly highlighted the way that their shared use of a transverse four-cylinder engine and steel frame tubes had evolved over the decades that separated them.

In the Sport's case, that format meant a 743cc, air-cooled powerplant with two valves per cylinder and twin overhead cams driven by gears between the middle pots, as on MV's racing fours. The unit was a bored-out version of the one that the firm



had introduced several years earlier with its strangely styled 600 Four. The Sport's higher 9.5:1 compression ratio, larger exhaust valves, and the use of four instead of just two 24mm Dell'Orto carburettors helped raise peak output to 65bhp at 7900rpm.

The race-derived engine had no generator, so a combined starter/dynamo had been added beneath it, connected by two belts. Crankcases were sandcast, in aluminium rather than the race bikes' magnesium. Final drive was by shaft, as with the 600. MV's autocratic boss, Count Domenico Agusta, who had died in 1971, had not wanted to encourage privateer racers to take on his factory team.

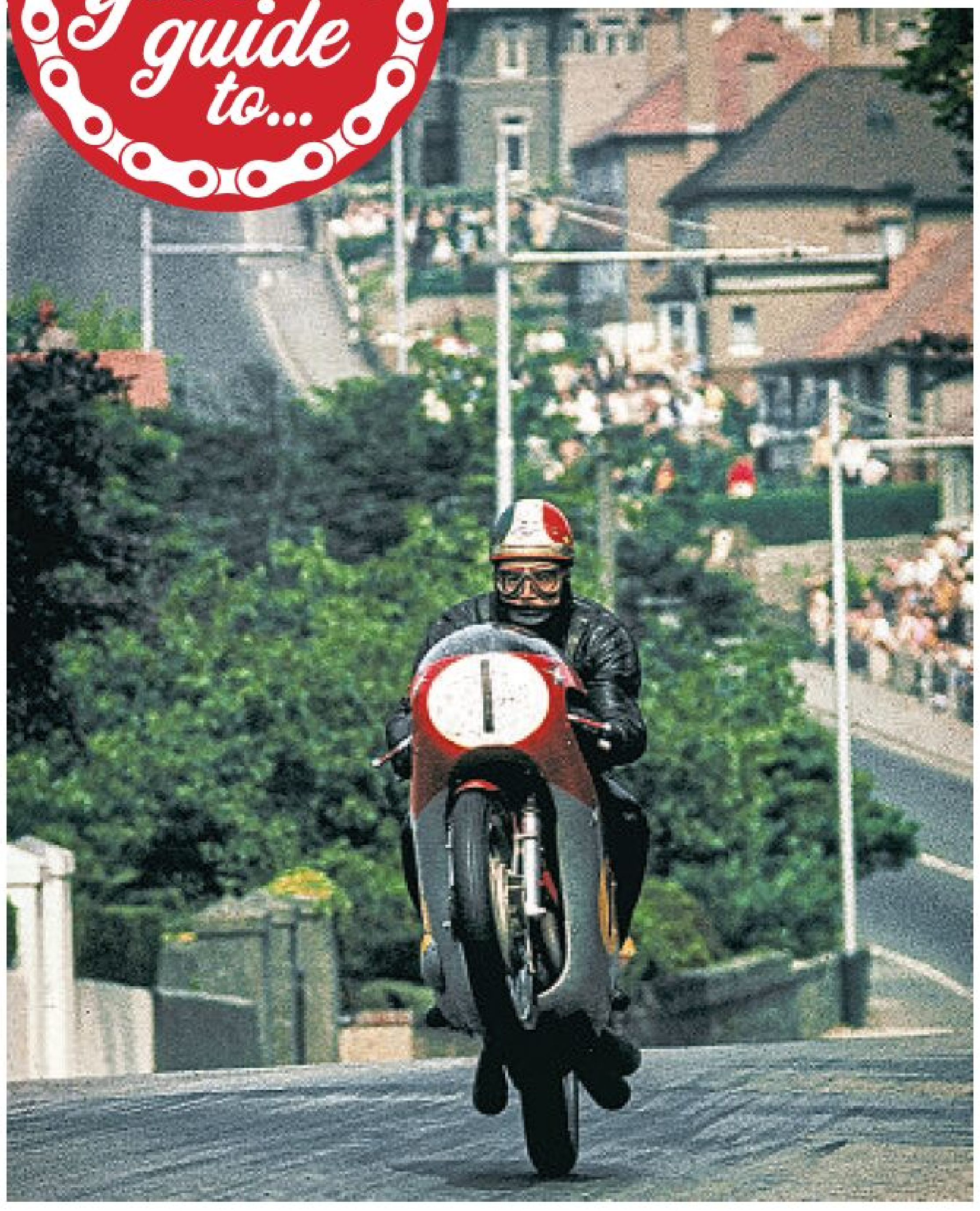
The frame, like the 600's, featured a single top tube instead of twin tubes like the race bikes. Ceriani provided the twin rear shocks and 35mm front forks and Borrani the alloy wheel rims. This 1973 model Sport originally had a big Grimeca front drum brake, but Alan, who restored this bike after buying it in poor condition, had upgraded to the 280mm discs that MV introduced for the following year.

He'd also fitted the factory option of a racy full fairing (a half-fairing and fly-screen were alternatives), with its striking red, white and blue paint scheme, which gave the 750 Sport a look unlike that of any other bike on the road in the early 1970s.

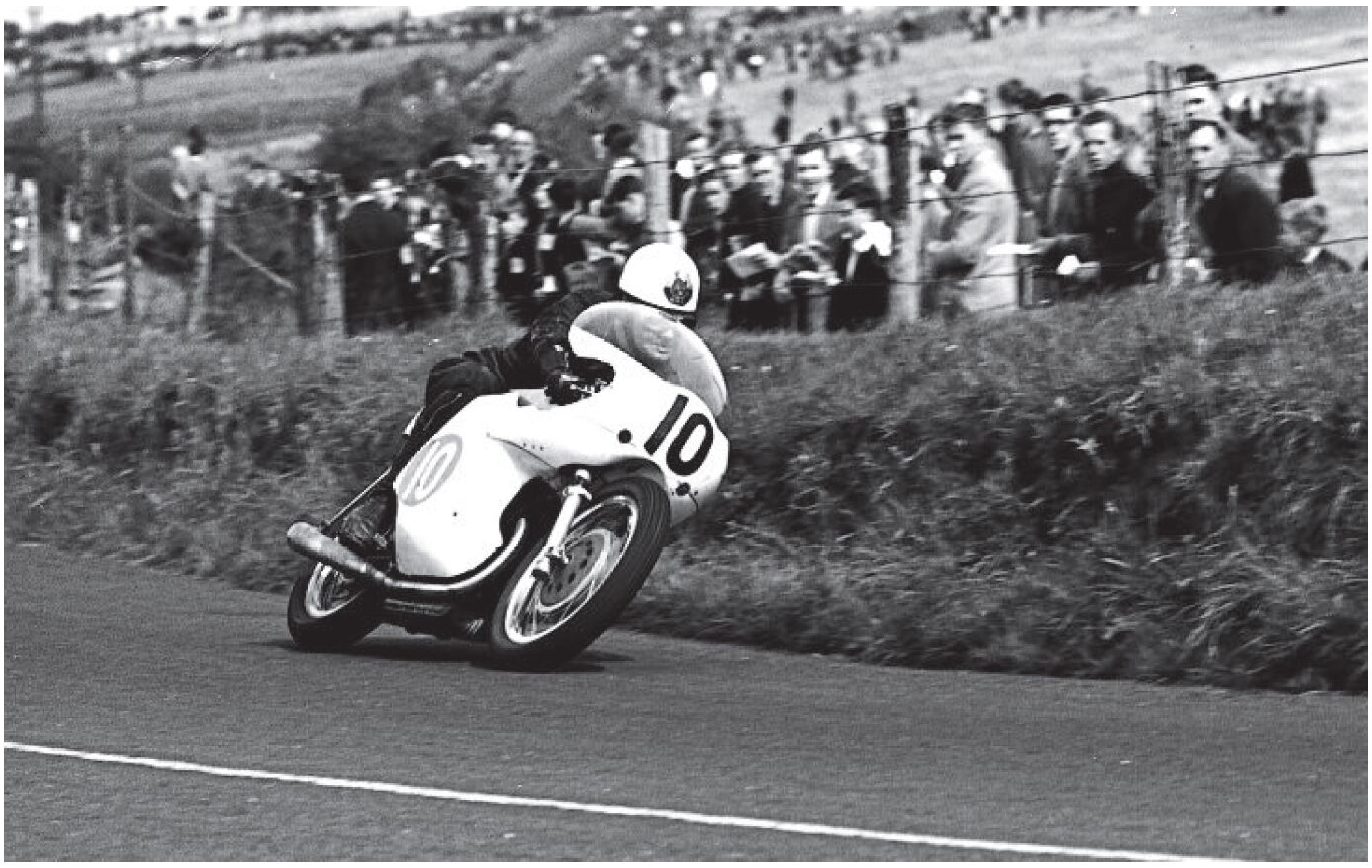
Red and silver renaissance

Unique styling was also something that the F4's designer, Massimo Tamburini, achieved all those years later, even though many other manufacturers had built four-cylinder sportsbikes by the time the 749cc four was launched to begin MV Agusta's rebirth under the control of Cagiva boss Claudio Castiglioni.

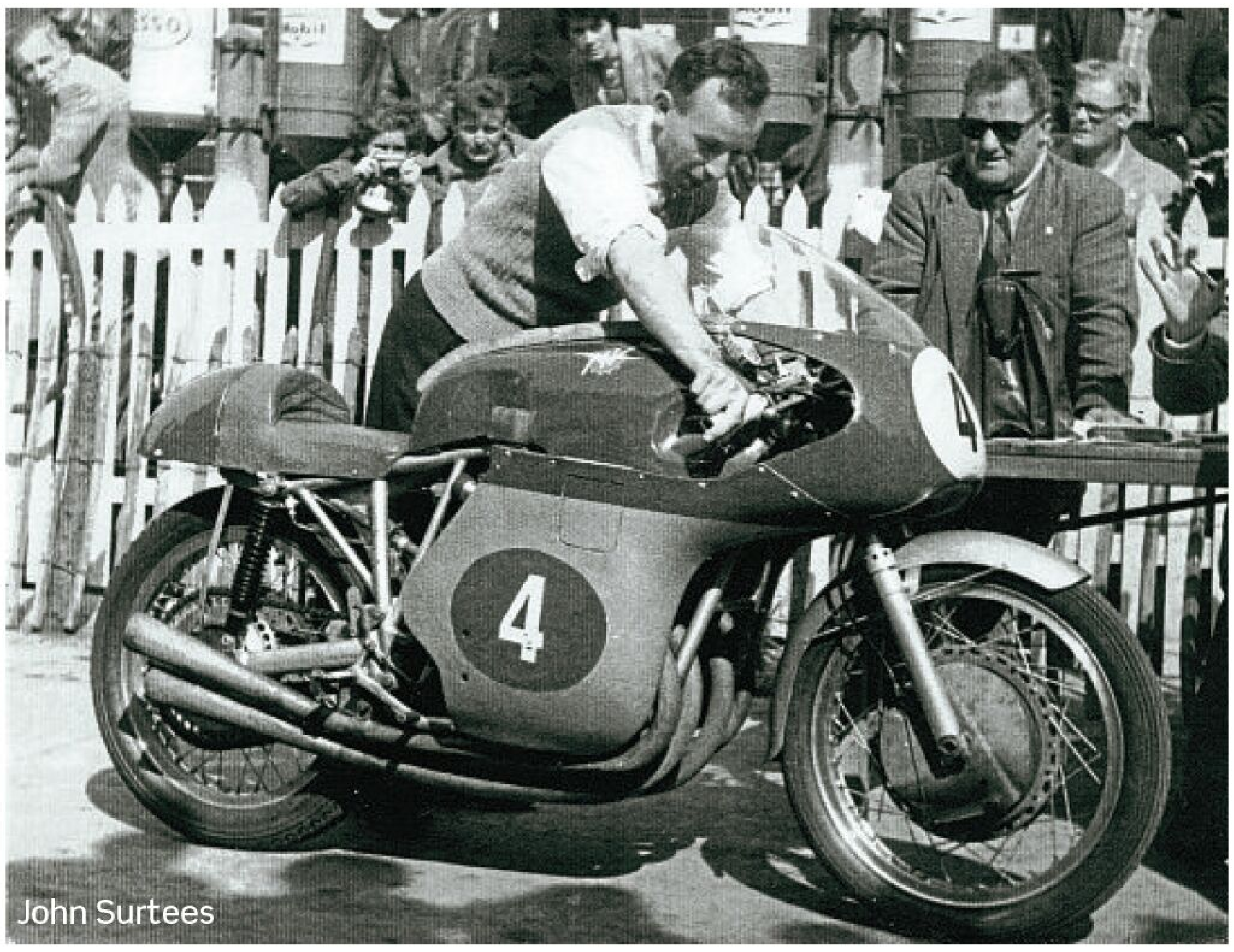
Along with the F4's sleek shapes, it was its attention to detail that captured the eye. From the tiny poly-ellipsoidal twin ➡



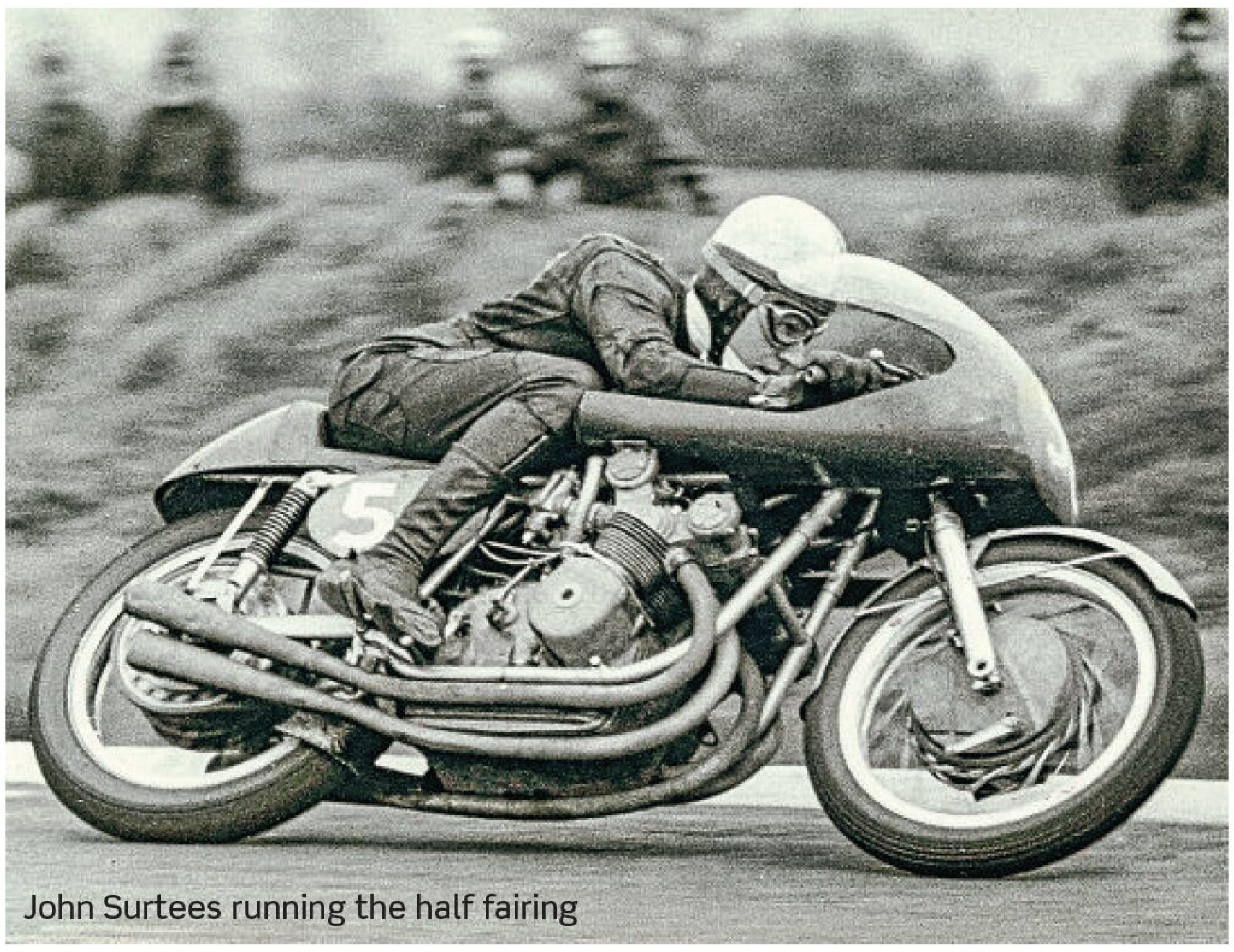
Ago, MV, at what is known as Ago's Leap, now with Bray Hill in the background



Rhodesian Gary Hocking on the MV 350



John Surtees



John Surtees running the half fairing

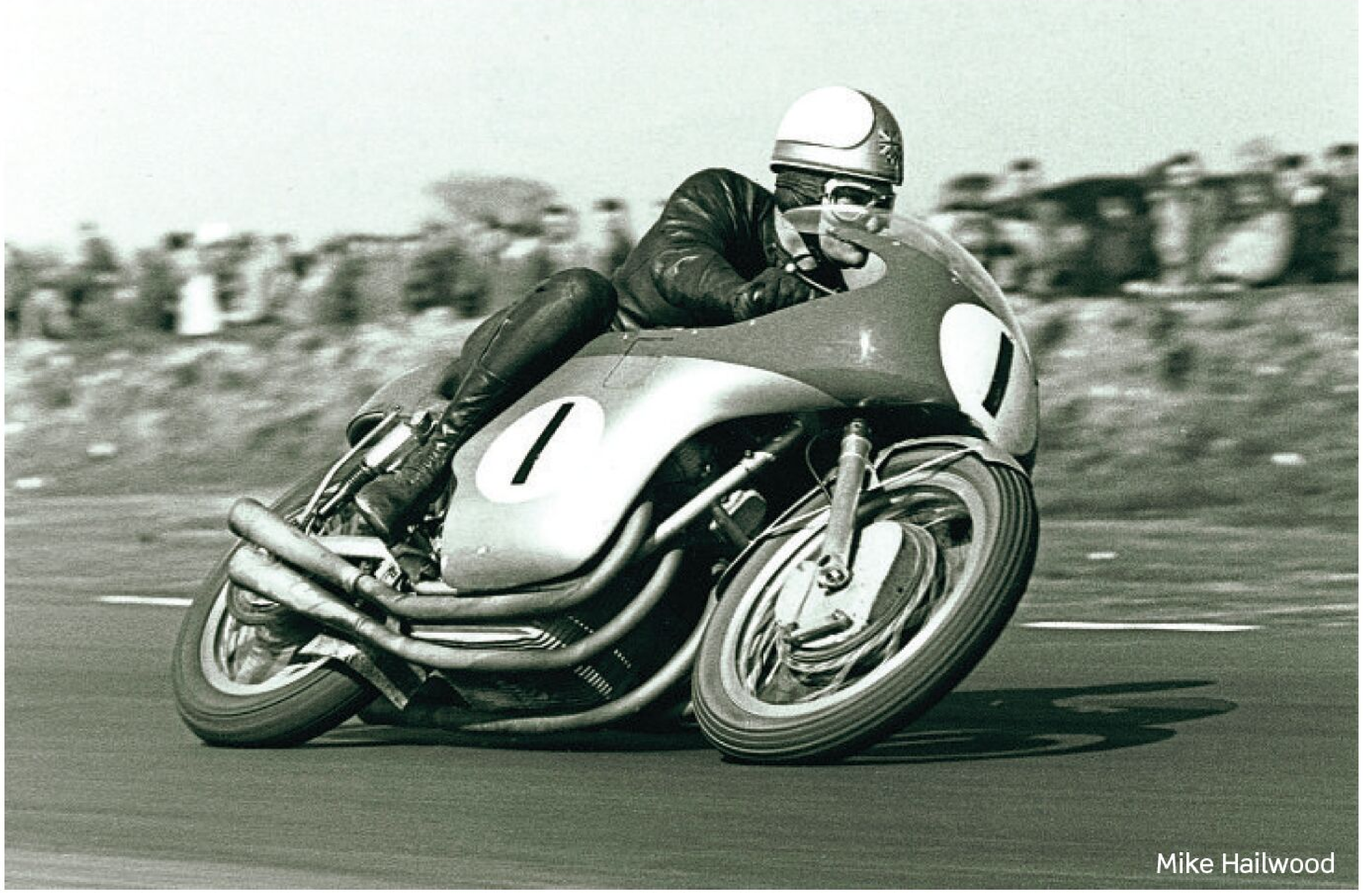
L to R: Frank Stazny on Jawa, and Mike Hailwood and Gery Hocking on MVs

headlights placed one above the other in its fairing nose to the four cigar-shaped silencers jutting from beneath its sculpted tailpiece, the MV was designed and put together with consummate skill and a refusal to take the easy option of using bought-in components.

The F4 had been more than 10 years in development and was packed with innovation, despite its relatively conventional specification. The liquid-cooled, 16-valve engine featured a radial four-valves-per-cylinder layout conceived in collaboration with engineers from Ferrari.

It produced a claimed 126bhp – getting on for twice the Sport's 65bhp output, with maximum power arriving at 12,500rpm in contrast to the older four's 7900rpm peak.

The F4 frame also used steel sections, but in this case the chrome-molybdenum tubes were combined with magnesium castings in critical areas. The massive but very light magnesium swingarm (the standard F4S had an aluminium swingarm)



Mike Hailwood

> **“The Sport lived up to every expectation, too. Riding it was a sensory overload from the moment I pressed the tinny-looking handlebar button to fire up.”**

was a very different structure from the Sport’s tubular steel item.

So too were its magnesium 17-inch wheels and fat radial tyres, a far cry from the older model’s 18-inch wire-spoked wheels and skinny cross-ply rubber. Superbike design had come a long way in those three decades.

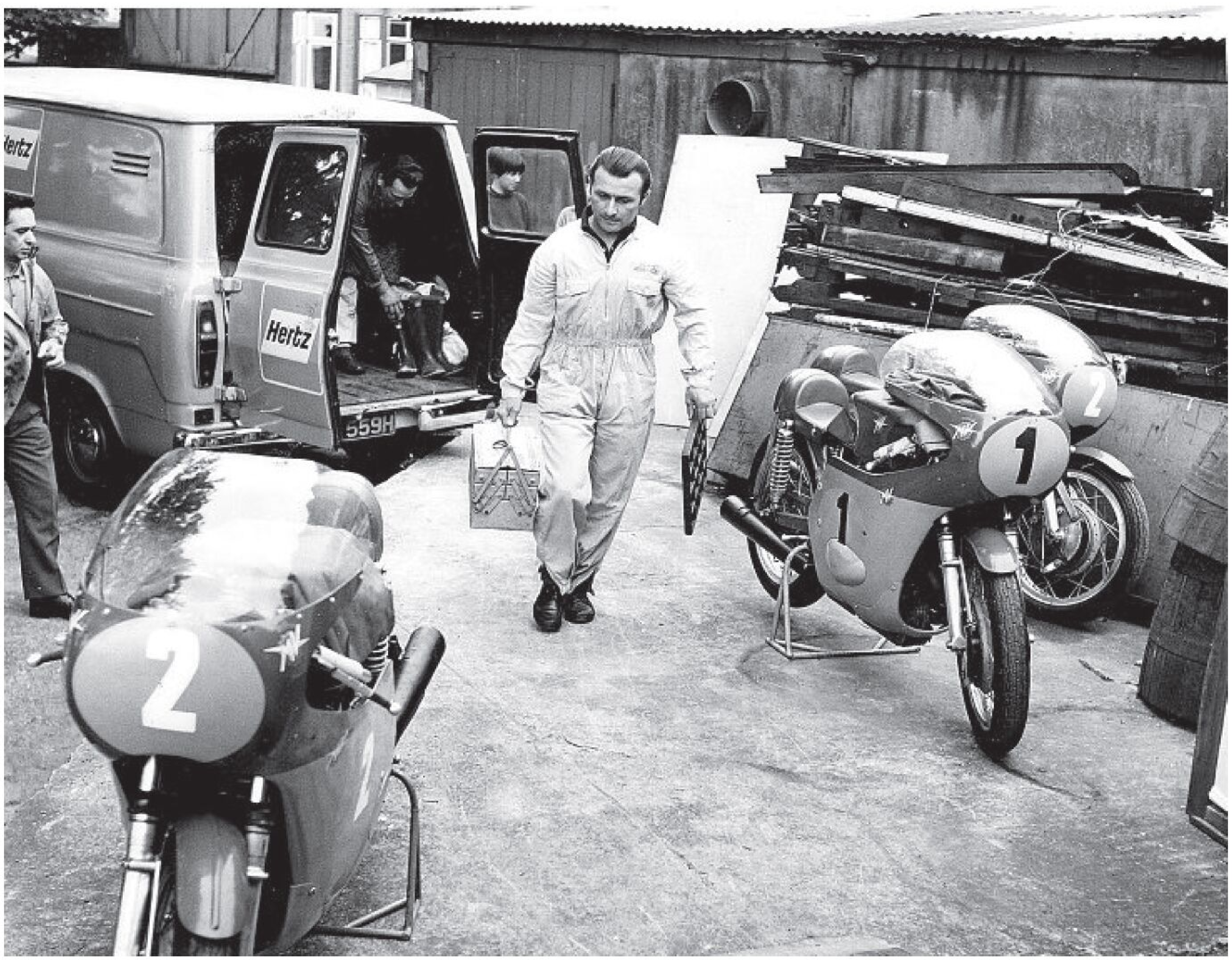
Seventies superstar

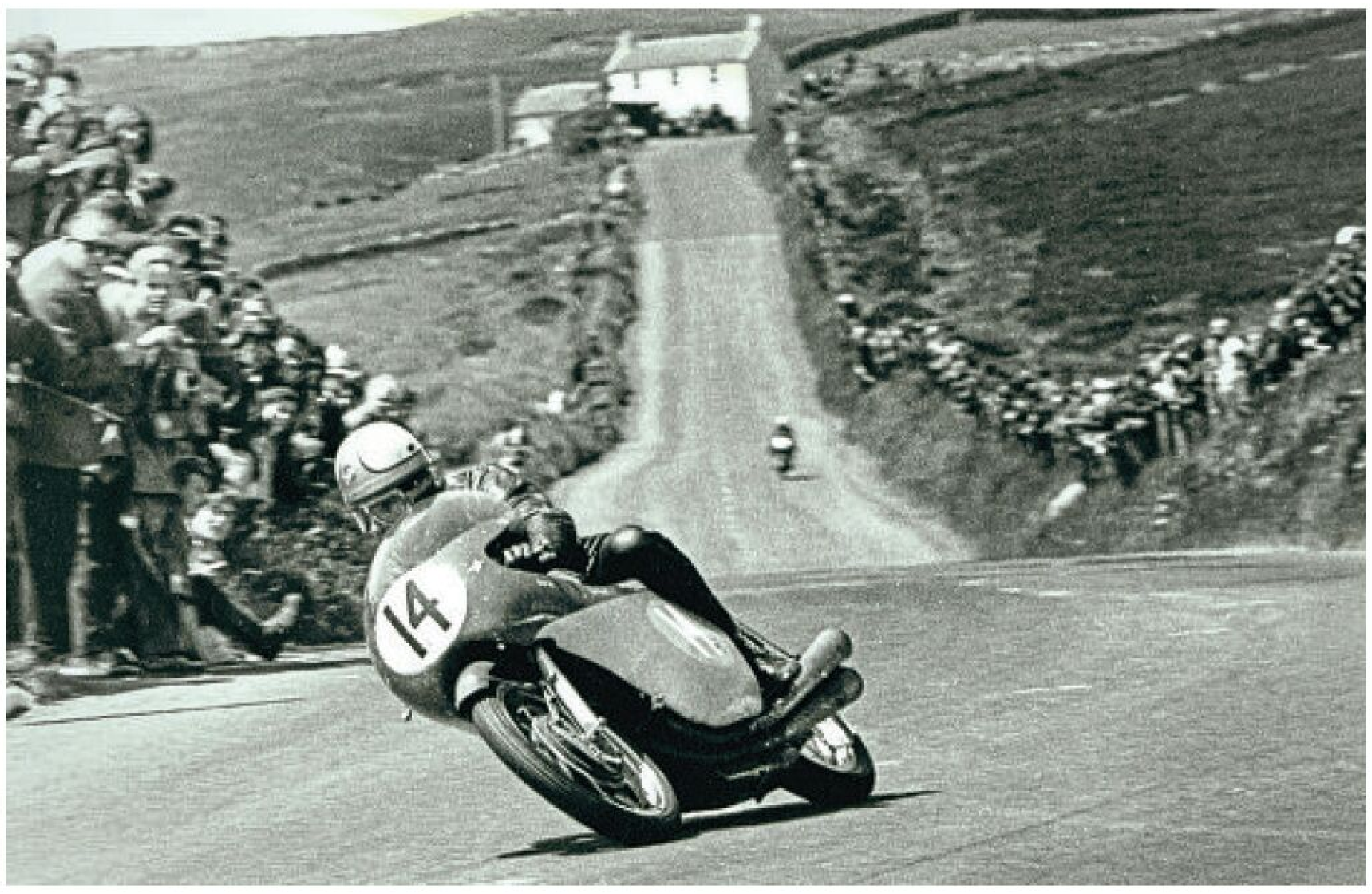
For all the Serie Oro’s nearly-new glitz and glamour, I did not hesitate before taking the 750 Sport’s key from Alan’s outstretched hand. The older MV was a machine I’d idolised ever since being inspired by tales of the Italian factory’s decades of Grand Prix domination with riders including Surtees, Hailwood and Ago.

The Sport lived up to every expectation, too. Riding it was a sensory overload from the moment I pressed the tinny-looking handlebar button to fire up its engine, unleashing a delicious cacophony of rumbling engine bearings, sucking from the unfiltered Dell’Orto carbs, and trumpeting from the straight-through Conti pipes.

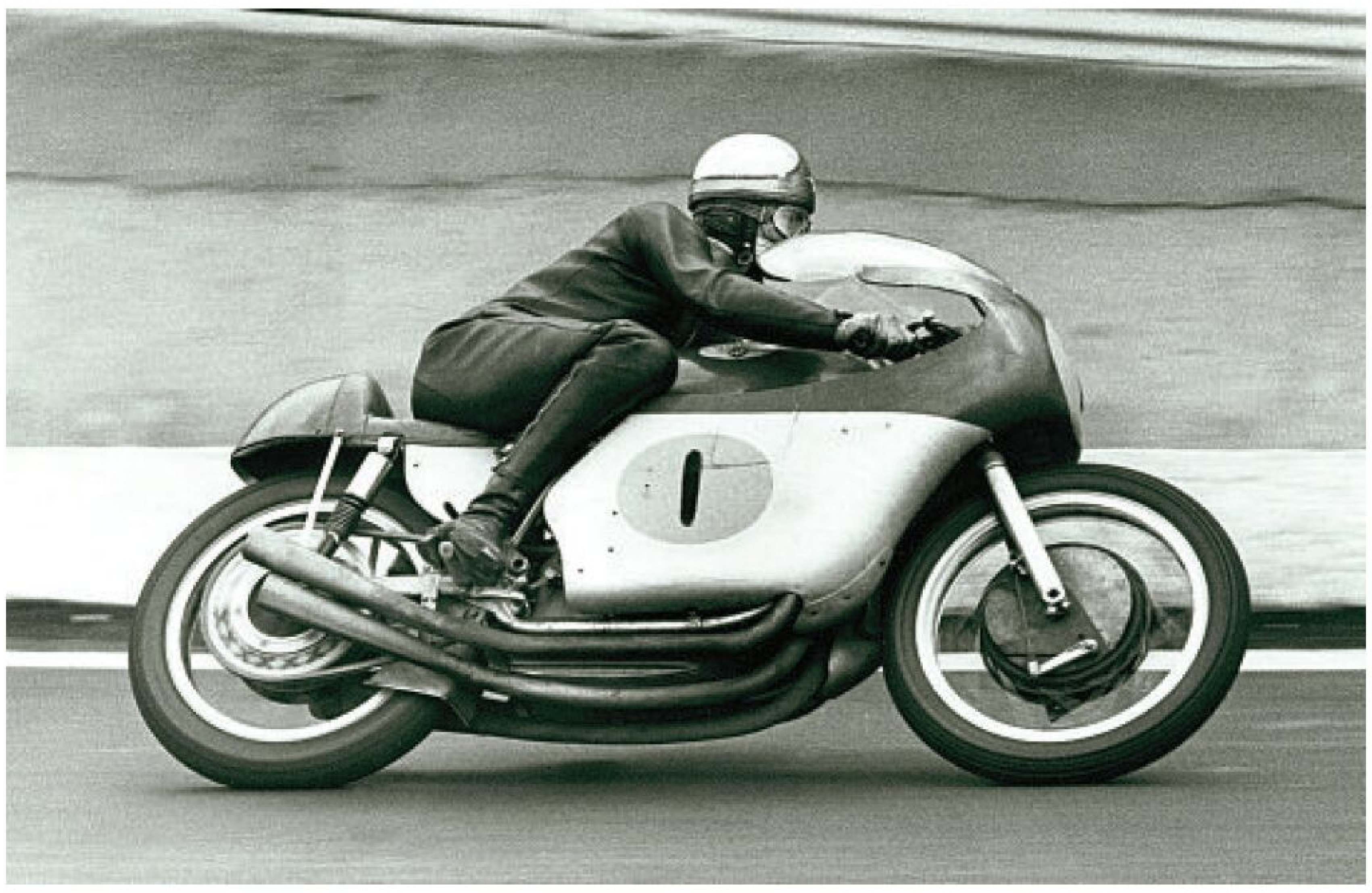
The clutch felt a bit sharp as I pulled away; it’s a slight weakness in an otherwise very strong motor. But the rest of the bike was surprisingly manageable and easy to ride, not least its very smooth-shifting, five-speed gearbox.

For slow-speed manoeuvres, the Sport felt tall and ungainly, and I wasn’t best pleased to trap my finger between fairing and petrol tank during one tight turn. But as the speed rose, its clumsiness ➡

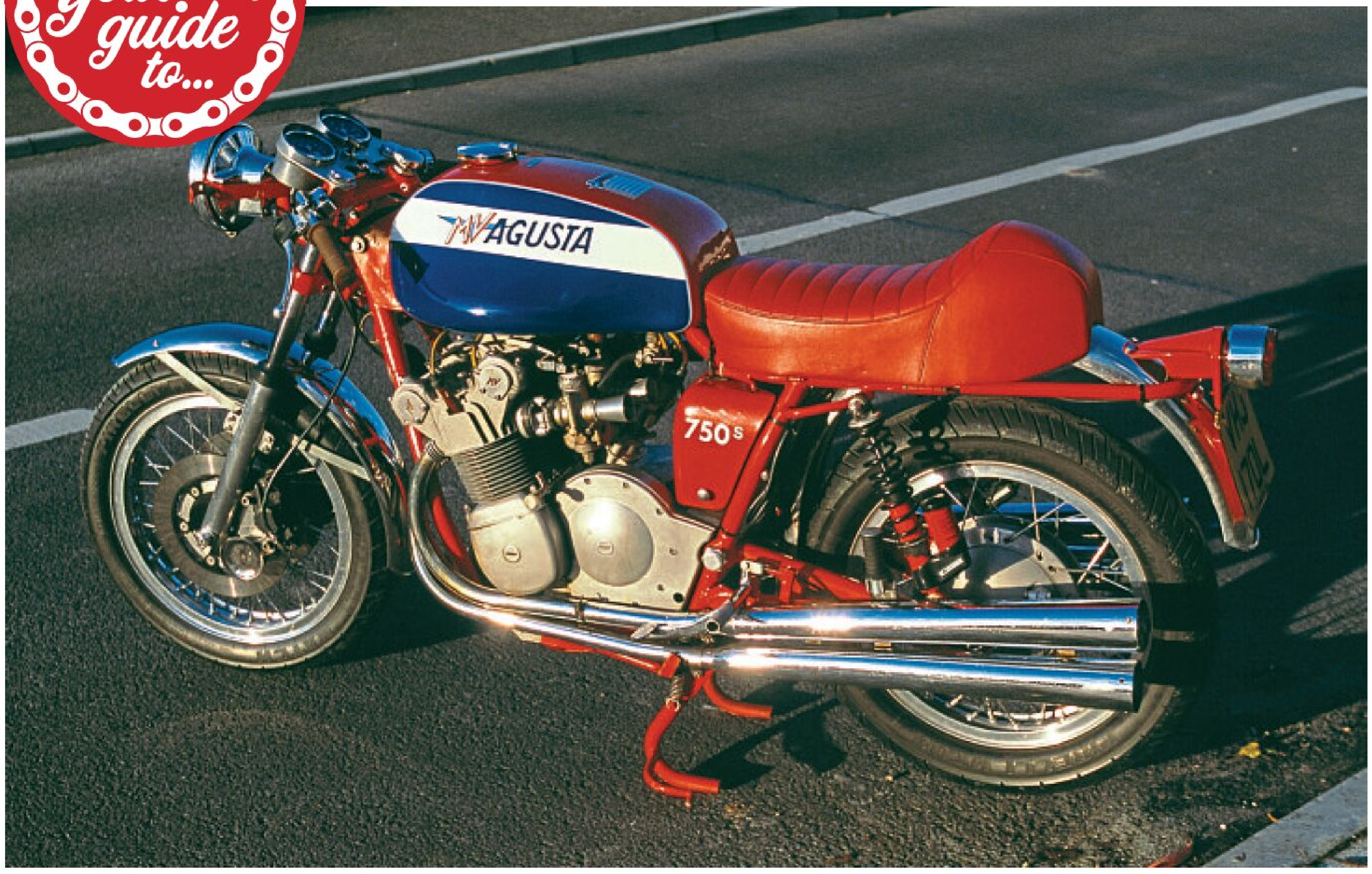




Hailwood coming down from Kate’s cottage on an MV – does it get any better?



No. 1, Hailwood and MV



disappeared – to be replaced by a reassuringly planted feel.

Alan was leading the way aboard the F4 and, after a few restrained miles to warm the engines, turned onto a dual carriageway and began to turn up the pace. As the MV charged forward with a bellow, I realised that if there's one thing more exciting than riding a fast, loud, magical Italian classic like this, it's doing so while following its modern-day equivalent.

Back in the early 1970s, the Sport didn't live up to MV's claims of near 130mph performance, managing about 115mph. But that was rapid by contemporary standards and still felt good decades later, partly because the engine was so smooth that it encouraged lots of revs.

As did that sound, especially the unforgettable din that drilled through my skull as the revs reached 5000rpm and the engine came on the cam in magnificent fashion. Rarely have I been so tempted to go up and down a bike's gearbox just for fun, particularly on a bike with an unfamiliar right-foot change.

Handling was pretty good too, despite what some people will tell you about the MVs' scary cornering antics. At 230kg, the Sport wasn't the lightest of bikes, and its drive shaft didn't help. But this bike's relatively modern but still quite period-looking pair of remote-reservoir Marzocchi shocks helped keep things stable while also soaking up most bumps.

Braking was one area where the MV showed its age, needing a firm squeeze of the handlebar lever, and preferably help from my left boot, to slow in anything resembling a hurry. But that's hardly fair criticism of a triple-disc set-up that had few rivals in the mid-1970s.

> ***"To get the F4 working properly, I had to keep it revving at more than 8000rpm. Or, better still, up near the 10,500rpm mark."***

Back then, the 750 Sport's main drawback was simply its price – £2500 in 1975, when Honda's CB750 cost under a grand. Sadly, that remains true. This bike sold at auction a couple of years ago for £85,500, confirming that for most people, owning a 750 Sport remains as out of reach as when it was when new.

Fast-forward three decades

Having unexpectedly had the chance to step from one of these exotic MVs to the other, I was thrilled to discover that they shared far more than heritage, engine layout, and the name on the fairing. Both felt very special, in their very different ways, despite their ubiquitous transverse-four layout.

	MV Agusta 750 Sport	MV Agusta F4 Serie Oro
Engine type	Air-cooled transverse four	Liquid-cooled transverse four
Valve arrangement	DOHC, eight valves	DOHC, 16 radial valves
Displacement	743cc	749cc
Bore x stroke	65 x 56mm	73.8 x 43.8mm
Compression ratio	9.5:1	12:1
Carburation	4 x 27mm Dell'Orto	Weber-Marelli fuel-injection
Clutch	Wet multiplate	Wet multiplate
Transmission	Five-speed	Six-speed, cassette type
Front suspension	35mm telescopic Ceriani	49mm USD Showa telescopic, adjustments for preload, compression and rebound damping
Rear suspension	Twin Marzocchi dampers, adjustments for preload	One Sachs damper, adjustments for preload, compression and rebound damping
Front brakes	Two, Brembo calipers, 280mm discs	, six-piston Nissin calipers, 310mm discs
Rear brake	Double-action caliper, 280mm disc	Four-piston caliper, 210mm disc
Front wheel	18in wire spoked	3.50 x 17in; cast magnesium
Rear wheel	18in wire spoked	6.00 x 17in; cast magnesium
Front tyre	100/90 x 18in Pirelli Match MT09	120/65 x 17in Pirelli Dragon Evo Corsa
Rear tyre	120/90 x 18in Pirelli Match MT08	190/50 x 17in Pirelli Dragon Evo Corsa
Wheelbase	1390mm	1398mm
Seat height	787mm	790mm
Fuel capacity	24 litres	20 litres
Dry weight	230kg	184kg
Instruments	Speedometer, tachometer, lights for high beam, low oil pressure	Tachometer; digital display with speedometer, water temperature, clock; lights for turn signals, neutral, headlight on, high beam, low oil pressure, generator, low fuel level, sidestand down, rev limit

The Sport had been tall, simple, rugged; the prominent badge on its tank a reminder that in 1973, the year it was built, Phil Read was winning the 500cc world title to continue a line of MV domination that had stretched back to 1958 but would last for only one more year.

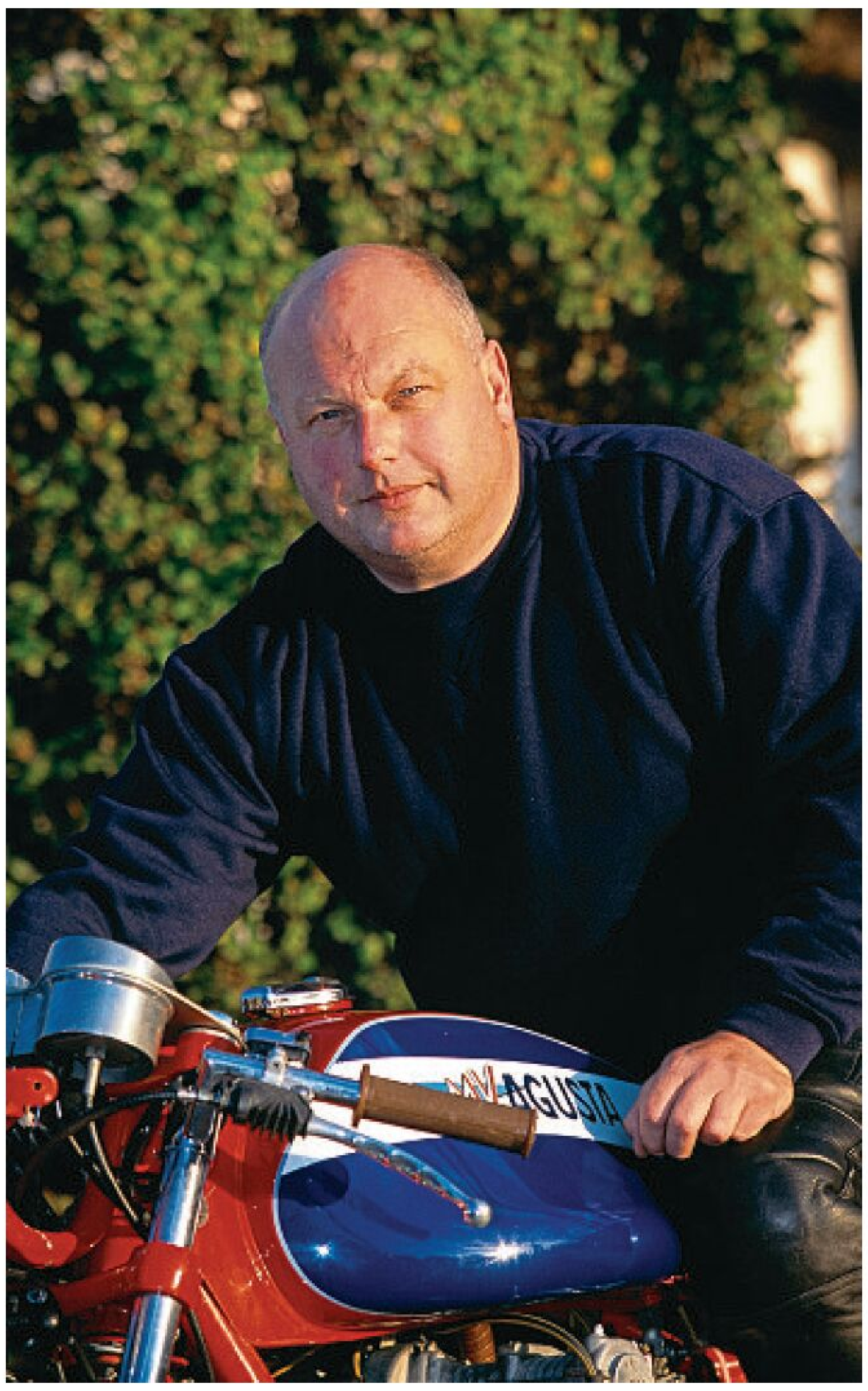
By contrast the F4's tank badge was more subtle and set among the much more complex blend of shapes that formed one of those rare bikes that was beautiful from every angle.

My view from the fairly low seat was distinctly modern. The speedometer was digital; the round, yellow-faced rev-counter was calibrated to 17,000rpm. A transverse-mounted steering damper sat above the adjustable tops of a pair of thick, 49mm upside-down Showa forks.

Having stepped off the Sport with my ears ringing, I'd expected its modern equivalent to feel relatively tame, but the F4 accelerated with pleasing smoothness, a crisp, snatch-free response from its fuel-injection system… and a hard-edged induction snarl that was distinctly reminiscent of its predecessor's.

Low-rev and midrange performance was unexceptional; typical of a highly-tuned 750. To get the F4 working properly, I had to keep it revving at more than 8000rpm. Or, better still, up near the 10,500rpm mark at which peak torque was produced, if not to the 12,600rpm at which the 'change up' warning light came on.

The reward for doing so was a soul-stirring sound from the intake system, as the radial-valve motor got to work and the Serie Oro ripped forward at a thrilling ➡



rate, heading for a top speed of close to 170mph.

The Serie Oro's high-rev howl wasn't as loud as the savage scream of the Sport at full chat, but Tamburini had managed to cheat noise regulations to give the F4 a voice which, at least with its rider's chin on the tank, echoed that of its famous ancestor.

Not every inherited characteristic was desirable. Not long after trapping a finger between the Sport's tank and fairing, I did the same thing while moving the F4 for the photo session, and its hopelessly narrow mirrors gave minimal rear-view advantage over the Sport, which had none at all.

In other respects, the chassis performance was excellent – not surprisingly, given that former Bimota co-founder Tamburini and his team had input into every detail of its design. At 184kg, the Serie Oro was respectably light, weighing almost 50kg less than the Sport if MV's figures are to be believed.

Equally importantly, its frame was incredibly rigid and its suspension gave a well-controlled ride. Albeit one that was sometimes slightly harsh though the clip-on bars on bumpy Kentish back-roads, despite being softer and more compliant than those of some contemporaries.

With a wheelbase of 1398mm, the F4 was officially 8mm longer than the Sport, but its much steeper steering geometry meant it steered far quicker. Compared to its ancestor, the Serie Oro was flickable, manageable, and effortlessly easy to ride fast.

It also gave massive grip due to those fat, sticky Pirelli radials and stayed very stable with the help of the steering damper. Braking power was in a different league too, thanks to a combination of Japanese six-piston Nissin calipers and 310mm discs.

Not everyone was blown away by the F4 on its debut. Some cynics argued that the Serie Oro was no lighter or more powerful than a Suzuki GSX-R750 costing less than a third of its £24,000 price (a low-mileage example is worth north of £30,000 these days).

But to assess the F4 Serie Oro in such terms was to miss the point regarding a bike that is one of the most stylish and immaculately detailed vehicles ever built and will be remembered as the machine with which one of the world's great motorcycle marques was reborn.

Decision time

The blast on the F4 was invigorating, but when I met up with Alan for a coffee before the ride back, I was glad to accept his offer to switch back to the older bike for the final leg.

That's not to denigrate the 750 F4 Serie Oro, which captivated me by being not just superbly quick, agile, and easy to ride, but also bursting with a raw, aggressive character that seemed perfectly in tune with its status as MV Agusta's flagship model. Having enjoyed the F4's pure speed and handling ability at its launch at the Monza circuit a couple of years earlier, I was impressed to find that it made an outstanding road bike too. Even so, as I headed back on the Sport in the fading sunshine of the evening, I was in no doubt about which of the two MV fours I'd choose.

More than half a century after it was produced, the 750 Sport's performance is still exhilarating. Its soundtrack makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand up. Add to that those gorgeous looks, exclusivity, and the direct link to MV's glorious Grand Prix racing history, and the result is one very special motorcycle. **CBG**

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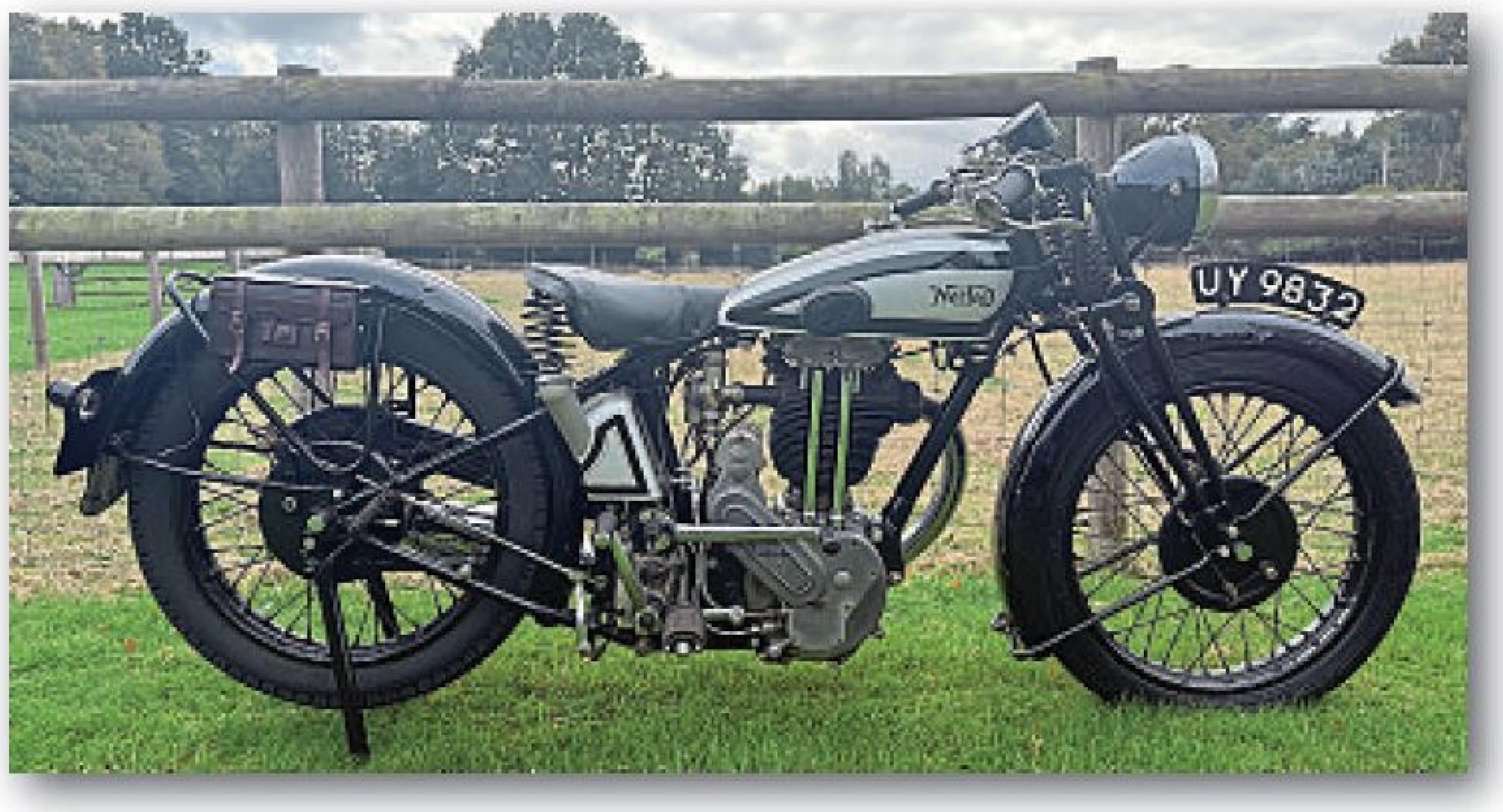

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STARFIRE
250
EWX
115H
BSA

Frank Westworth

looks back at:

BSA Starfire

Beezer Supernova – light blue touch paper and retire rapidly. BSA's Starfire can provide explosive entertainment!

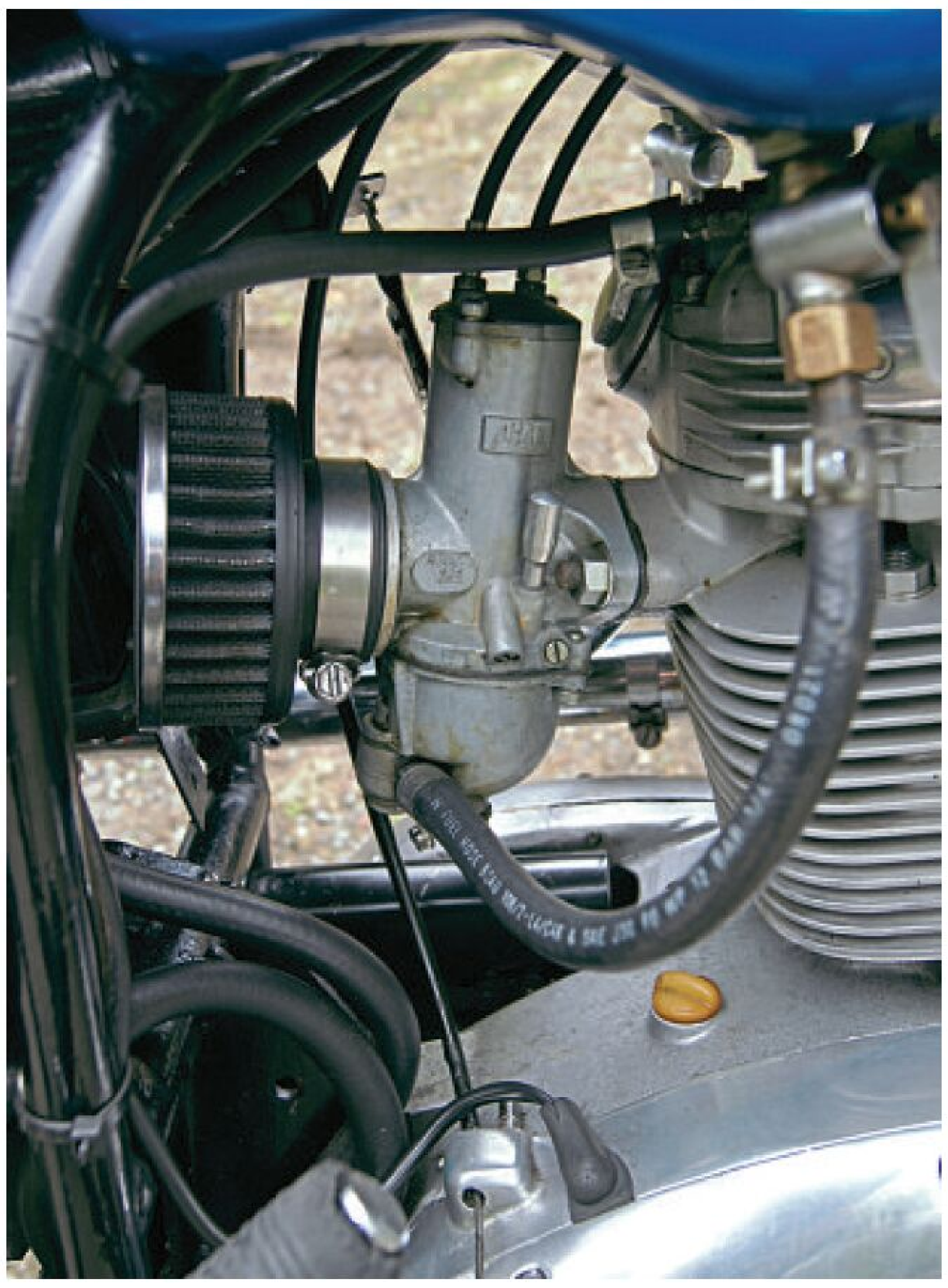
Photos by Rowena Hoseason and Frank Westworth

ONE OF MY OWN VERY FAVOURITE BIKES – OF ALL BIKES, not just a small subset, like 250 Singles, or similar – is the BSA (or indeed Triumph) oily-framed 250 built in 1971. I really like them, and at great cost to both my sanity and my wallet, I've owned a few, a couple of them for more than a decade each, which is a long time. A bike I've only ridden but never owned is the predecessor to those 1971 BSA B25SS machines – that's correct, the bike you can see here, the Starfire.

The recipe was simple: bring BSA's learner-capacity single, a machine with heritage starting with the 1958 launch of the C15 Star bang up to date for 1967. BSA certainly supplied that bang. The C25 Barracuda looked great, sounded just like any other 250 BSA, and was tuned right up to that breathtaking bang point. Yep, it was fast and almost competitive in the real riding world with the invading 250s from Honda and the like. But to achieve the boost from the old C15's 15bhp to a rather more rousing 24, while sticking with the ohv single format proved… ah… explosive. But they were fast, and BSA persevered with its unruly but sporting single, although it ditched the Barracuda designation and labelled UK bikes Starfire – a name already used in America. All very Fireball XL5…

To an experienced eye, BSA was outright asking for trouble with the Starfire. The 1969 brochure blurb almost double-dares mechanical catastrophe to clatter into action. "Compress the power of the Victor and the Shooting Star into a compact 250cc powerplant," it suggests without a wince. "Raise compression by a third." That's pushing things. "Call it the 250 Starfire. Cousin to ➡

GOLDEN JUBILEE
BSA
1958 - 2008
OWNERS CLUB



The Starfire uses a 28mm Amal Concentric as standard. Reckless young men used to fit the 30mm version to make it go even faster

a couple of winners. Then watch it become the most potent all-rounder in the motorcycle world." That's torn it. Tell that to any rider – not just the teenage tearaway who typically takes the blame – and you're inviting them to twist the grip until the big end bearings splinter into white metal remnants. Which is pretty much what happened, all those decades ago.

Right here, in modern times, riding it, all the reasons are clear. The B25 shares some engine characteristics with much more modern machinery, belying its old-fashioned ohv engineering. Like the much later ohc Rotax single-cylinder motors, it won't tug away on a sniff of throttle. The Starfire is devoid of dof-dof-dof. It wants revs, straight from the stops. It likes a twist of the grip as you kick it over; then when the eager engine catches, it wants another healthy handful to pull away cleanly.

If you're expecting a heavy BSA flywheel to waft you off on an effortless surge of urge, then you'll almost certainly stall the engine before the front tyre meets the road's tarmac.

STARFIRE
250

STARFIRE
250

BSA
EWX
115H

> ***"Call it the 250 Starfire. Cousin to a couple of winners. Then watch it become the most potent all-rounder in the motorcycle world."***

It feels slightly cruel, revving a cold engine to this extent, but the Starfire is its own worst enemy. It just doesn't want to dawdle.

It wasn't always this way. We won't drag you back in time to Edward Turner's Terrier, although that's the oldest ancestor on the B25 Starfire's family tree. A few generations later, in its first C15 incarnation, BSA's 250 single ran 8.25:1 compression and an output of 15bhp at 7000rpm. Seven grand sounds like more than enough to me, allowing for the manufacturing tolerances, material quality, and oil technology of the time. But in 1959 and at the start of the 1960s it was possible to market a small capacity single as a straightforward commuter; not especially inspiring and cheap at twice the price. The C15 was intended to be a utility commodity. No thrills required.

By the end of the swinging decade, learner bikes needed to be much more than that. To stand any chance of selling, the Starfire had to be a sportster with some proper poke up its pipe. Hence the B25 motor was bumped up to 10:1 compression and peak power rose to 24bhp at 8250rpm – levels which were certainly impressive back then (almost reaching the holy grail of 100bhp per litre); somewhat worrying now. For some perspective, consider Honda's recent single-cylinder GB350S, a 'retro' which produces almost 21bhp at 5500rpm and needs an unfashionable five gears to stir it along. The Starfire made do with four ratios, and all the engine's torque is tucked away at the top of the rev range.

The B25 has a solid 15lb.ft on tap – although the larger Honda offers 21.4lb.ft arriving at just 3000rpm – but it isn't available until a lofty 7500rpm. So, the B25 doesn't deliver the goods until 500rpm higher than the C15's point of maximum output. Han Solo would've had a very bad feeling about this…

Egged on by the fruity tune coming from the so-not-standard exhaust pipe fitted ➡

“It’s completely keen to crack on, possibly all the way to its theoretical top speed of 80mph. Old-time road testers who achieved those top speeds must’ve benefitted from rubber-mounted eyeballs...”

to the test victim, all such numbers are banished to the back of the rider’s mind. The Starfire’s light; its steering is precise and responsive, and it clicks smoothly through the cogs as we sprint up the hill out of Bude, heading for the twisty B-roads which snake back and forth across the River Tamar. The 250 is utterly in its element between 45 and 60mph and fourth gear is fairly flexible – less so second and third, where you really do have to keep the engine spinning on the up-shift to prevent it lugging in the higher gear. Pushing it above 60 starts the whole thing buzzing, and as I’m not entirely certain how many miles this clean motor has covered since its last overhaul, I’m disinclined to push my luck. Trouble is the motor doesn’t feel tight or unwilling. Just the opposite. It’s completely keen to crack on, possibly all the way to its theoretical top speed of 80mph. Old-time road testers who achieved those top speeds must’ve benefitted from rubber-mounted eyeballs.

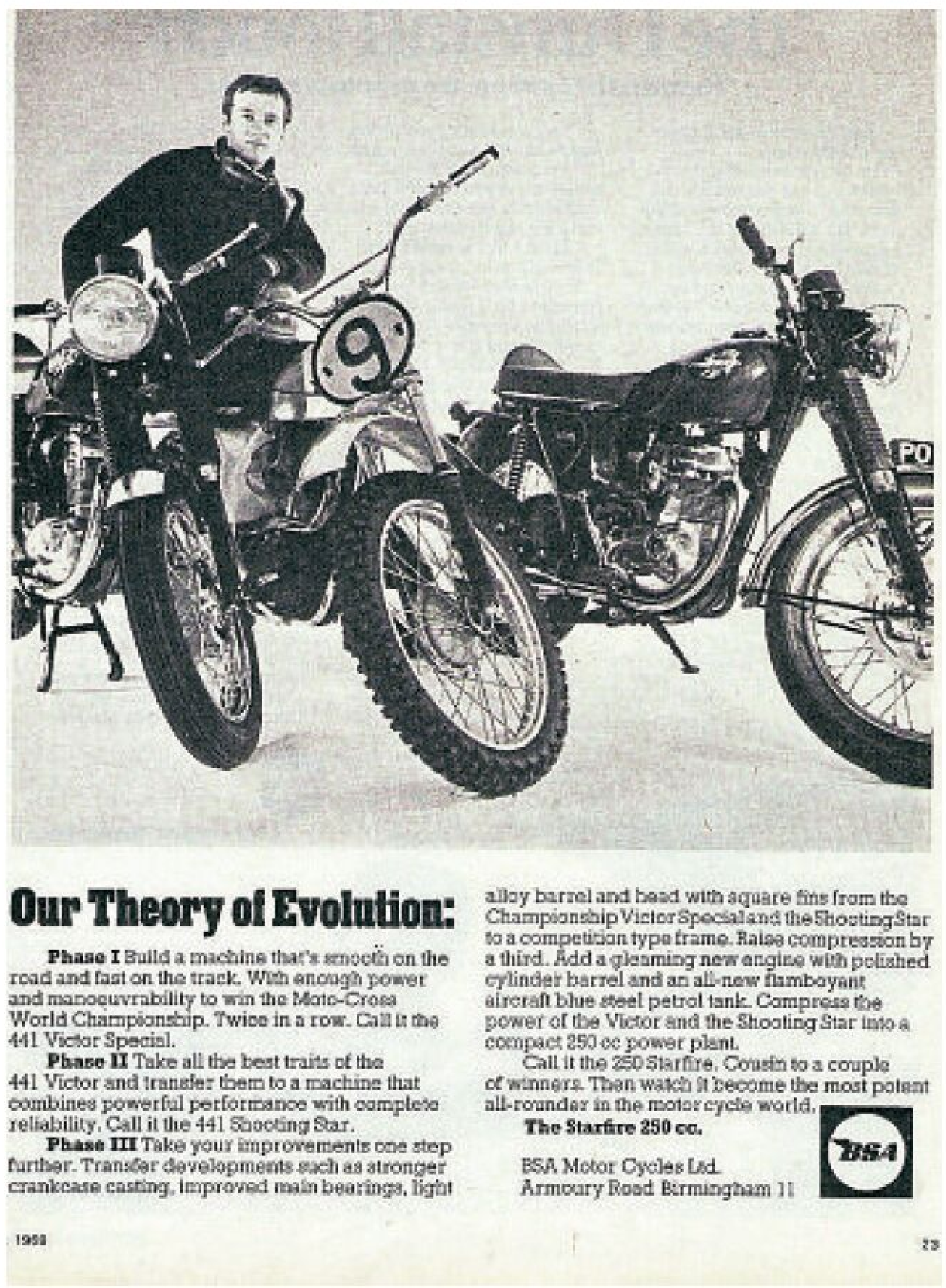
You can see why they felt confident about pushing the Starfire that hard. Before the Awful Exploding Truth became known, it was celebrated for being a ‘well-made motorcycle’ with excellent brakes; outstanding performance from a 250 engine.’ It undoubtedly has that whole big bike thing going on for it and shares some key chassis components with its sibling 441 single and even the firm’s twins. Back then, this led to some suggestions that the 250 was over-sprung, giving a harsh ride on rougher roads – that was probably more the difference between American and British preferences, as UK riders typically opt for a tauter set-up while US models are more softly sprung.

Those long-ago testers certainly weren’t kidding about the stoppers. The seven-inch 2ls front brake is a bit of a beast. It’s more than capable of squealing the tyre and nearly caught me out in a field gateway while I was spinning the Starfire around for some snaps. Speaking of which, dashing back and forth on a leafy lane was a doddle on this bike. It’s the very essence of nippy manoeuvrability and repeated U-turns didn’t trouble the clutch or my composure. It’s very manageable indeed.

We also had cause to shove and shuffle the bike about a bit (trying to make the most of dappled sunlight) which revealed several remarkable things. The 250 would idle contentedly for several minutes while I fiddled with the camera. It has a decently robust sidestand which holds it at a secure angle. It was a doddle to handle, even on gravel and rough road surfaces. Most welcome of all, when the engine did finally succumb to slumber, while I struggled to wedge a hot hand into a slightly sweaty glove, it fired up again with but a single prod of the lever. It repeated that trick for the rest of the afternoon; impressive, given the rising temperature on the day.

When I checked the data, I was more than mildly surprised to see that when the seat height was listed in period road tests, it varied between 31 and 33 inches. This is before the ‘too tall’ oil-in-frame kerfuffle, remember. If I’d been asked to judge by the seat of my own pants, I would have guessed at 29, maybe 30 inches, suggesting that the Starfire’s slim midriff helps to keep most rider’s feet planted firmly on terra firma.

Feet on the ground: head in the clouds? Maybe. It’s very easy to overlook the bike’s rotten reputation if you take a quick spin on a well-maintained B25 today, with all its peppy potential to provide entertainment. Then you



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The Starfire 250 cc.

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1968

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STARFIRE
250

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put the Plus in Motorcycling
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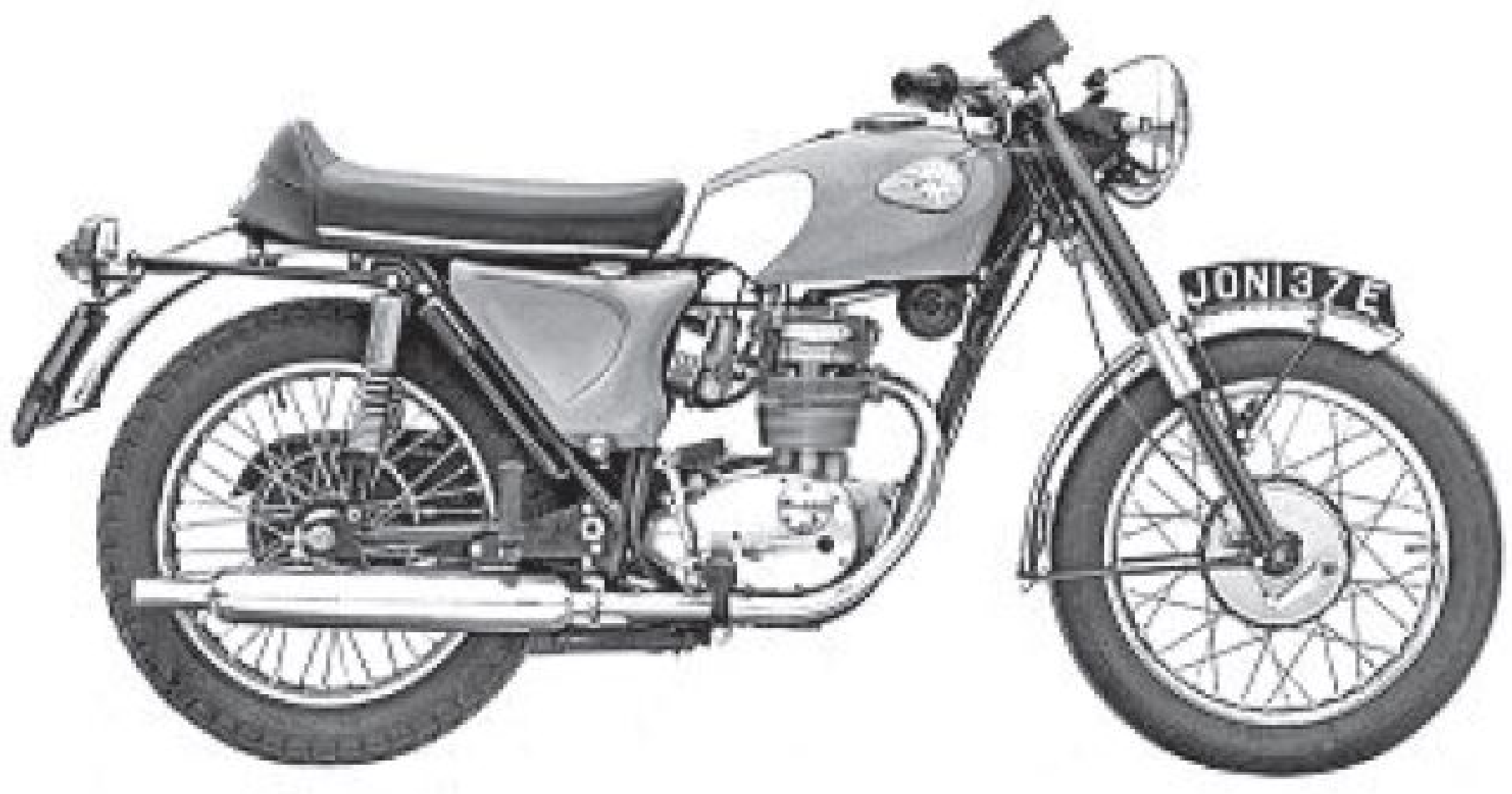
come back down to earth with a bump by considering the 250's fatal flaws. The oil seal which fits on the end of the crank is often the culprit when the big end shell bearings fail. An ominous knocking from below when the motor's cold and a flickering oil pressure light indicate that all is not well – and this could happen in as little as 10,000 miles from new. Assume that the engine's been rebuilt, then. Ask for receipts…

Dedicated owners change the oil every 1500 miles and change the crank end seal at 5000-mile intervals – it's one of those jobs which takes an afternoon once you've got the hang of it and can save extensive anguish and expense in the long term.

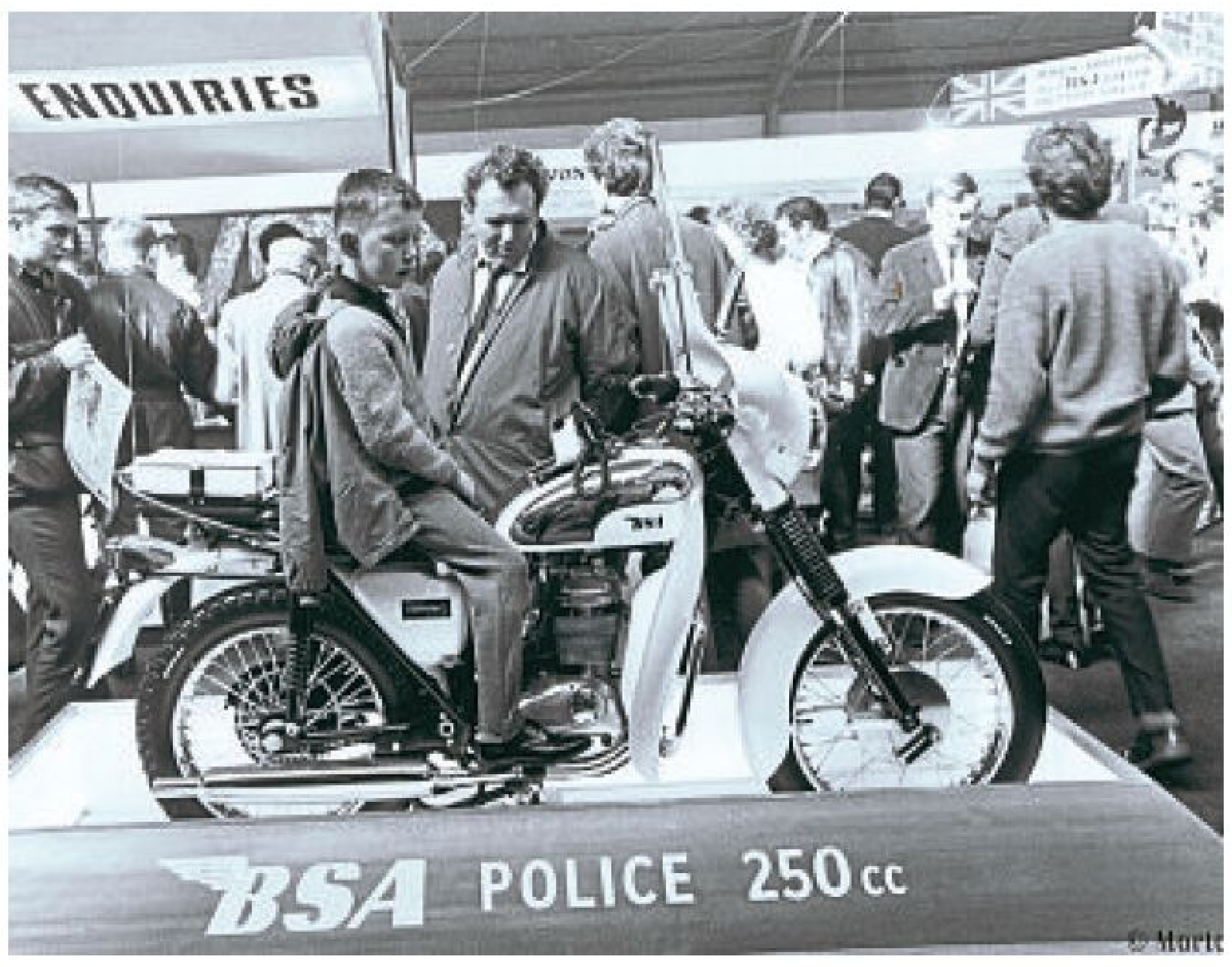
It also pays to stay on top of any oil leaks, make sure that lubricant circulates unhindered – the crankshaft's sludge trap can be a culprit for blocking the flow – or maybe consider converting to using big end shells from a Triumph 500. And yes, we asked for advice here from a Top BSA Singles Expert. These are better bearings than the B25 ones but fitting them means you'll need to redirect the oil flow to get it back up to the piston. The accepted practice is apparently to shave wide, shallow grooves along the top of the outer surface of the big end, but this may be one of those 'don't try this at home' moments unless you're an experienced engineer yourself…

Other alternatives to give the crank an easier life are to insert a 2mm decompression plate to lower the engine's 10:1 ratio (a bit fiddly as you'll need pushrods adjusted to suit), or to fit a low compression 8.5:1 piston from a Fleetstar. With the latter option, expect to find that every other B25 owner on the planet has already beaten you to it, so you may need to smile nicely at your local engineering firm and get them to smooth the crown of a standard Starfire piston. Don't try a C15 piston – the combustion chamber is an entirely different shape and it won't do you any favours. Join the excellent BSA Owners' Club and ask advice before spending money or cutting metal.

When you see a Starfire for sale which is otherwise immaculate but 'the oil light comes on when the engine is warm,' then it's due a bottom end rebuild. This is like an aching tooth: it isn't going to get better on its own, and the longer you leave it the worse the treatment will be. Tell the vendor the



BSA Barracuda – renamed Starfire, due to Plymouth owning the name



A BSA Fleetstar, less performance and aimed at the forces

The last BSA 250cc C12 off the line in 1958, a predecessor of the Starfire

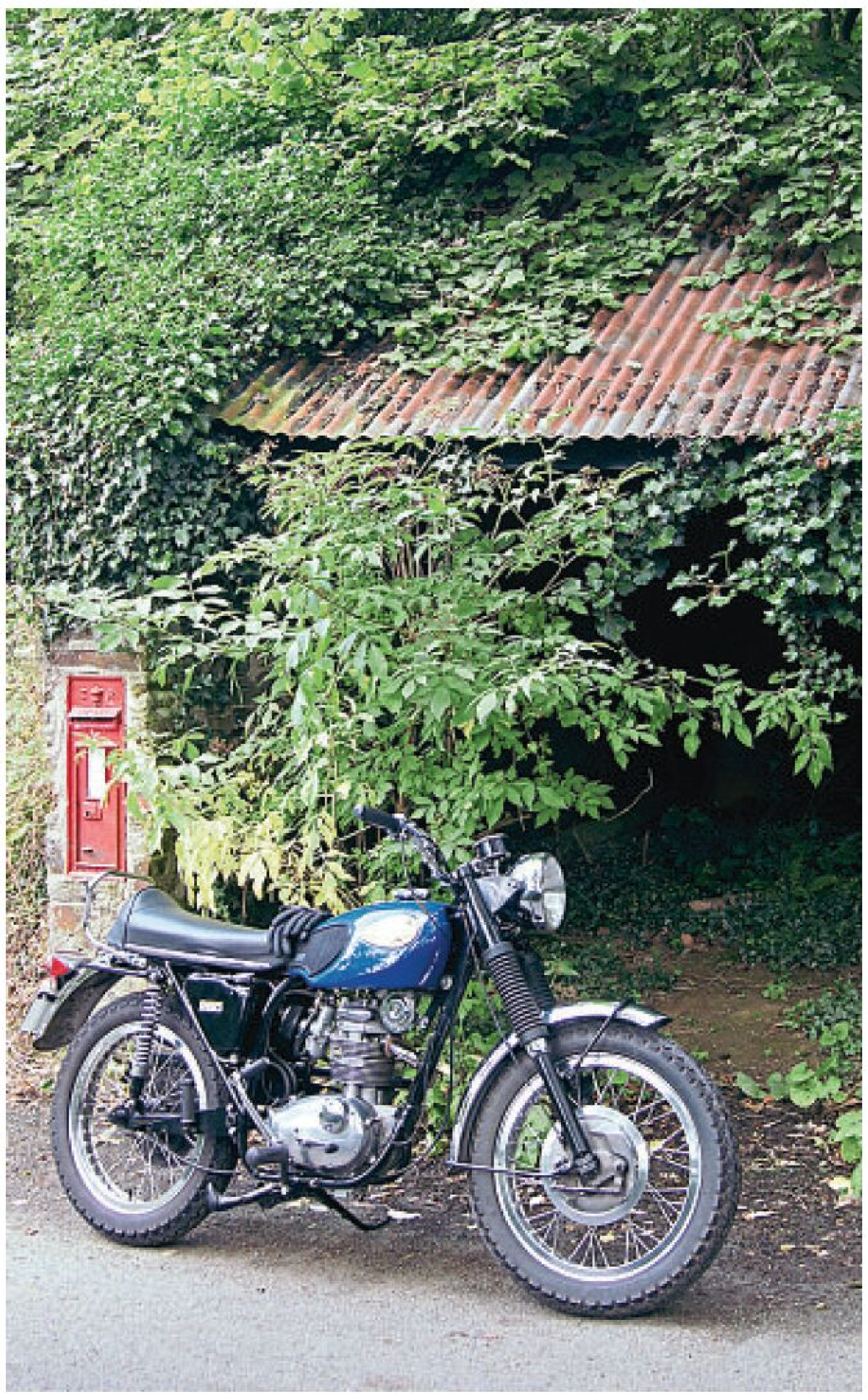
SPECIFICATION – BSA Starfire – the small print

BUILT: 1967 to 1970 **ENGINE:** Single-cylinder air-cooled ohv four-stroke **CAPACITY:** 249cc **BORE X STROKE:** 67 x 70mm **COMPRESSION:** 10:1 **MAX POWER:** 24bhp @ 8250rpm **CARBURETTOR:** 28mm Amal concentric Ignition: Coil **GENERATOR:** Alternator **CLUTCH:** Multi-plate with integral cush drive **TRANSMISSION:** Four-speed constant mesh **FRAME:** Single downtube, double cradle for engine **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Tele forks, hydraulically damped **REAR SUSPENSION:** Twin Girling shocks, hydraulically damped **FRONT BRAKE:** 2ls 7in drum **REAR BRAKE:** 7in sls drum **FRONT TYRE:** 3.25 x 18 **REAR TYRE:** 3.50 x 18 **WHEELBASE:** 52in **SEAT HEIGHT:** 32in **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 7.5in **WEIGHT:** 302lb dry **BRAKING:** 29ft from 30mph **FUEL ECONOMY:** 78mpg average **ACCELERATION:** 0-60mph in 7.8 seconds **TOP SPEED:** 80mph **PRICE NEW:** £258.16/6 in 1969 **PRICES NOW:** Negotiable…

bad news and make a commensurately low offer. Then you can set about the necessary mods (or pay a nice man to do the job for you), and you'll have a handsome machine to ride where you know exactly what's been done inside the engine.

Up top, the phosphor bronze valve guides wear rapidly and are best replaced with cast iron items. Rapid bore wear is harder to fix; either the rider needs to exert control over his or her enthusiasm or be prepared for regular rebores. Old road tests reckon that the Starfire was sufficiently rapid and roomy to regularly carry a passenger: by contrast I'd suggest that if you actually want to extend engine longevity then it would be better to avoid the extra load of a pillion. Or even a particularly large lunch…

Vibration is another bugbear which can progress from a minor irritation into major angst. Don't let mounting rubbers and shims wear out or work loose: rattles and fractures are the inevitable consequence. In fact, staying on top of routine maintenance is absolutely essential if you're going to ride much on a B25 Starfire or its snappy predecessor, the C25 Barracuda. Most of these 250s' worst, well-documented weaknesses can be addressed with care and attention, engine mods and oil changes, and a healthy dose of self-control on the part of the pilot. Ridden at 55mph over a couple of thousand 'classic miles' each year, they'll be no less reliable than any other old bike. It all depends on the owner. BSA built lots of these machines, but finding a decent example today can be a struggle, and even in these challenging times they're not cheap. Their marketplace rarity possibly indicates that their owners all love them and refuse to be parted, or that – just possibly – lots of them achieved the ultimate expression of Big Bang Theory, BSA style. You choose… **CBG**



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YAMAHA TRX850: One of a Kind

At the time, we thought the TRX850 was a Japanese copy of a Ducati – but with hindsight and insight, Alan Cathcart tells us there was much more to this interesting machine

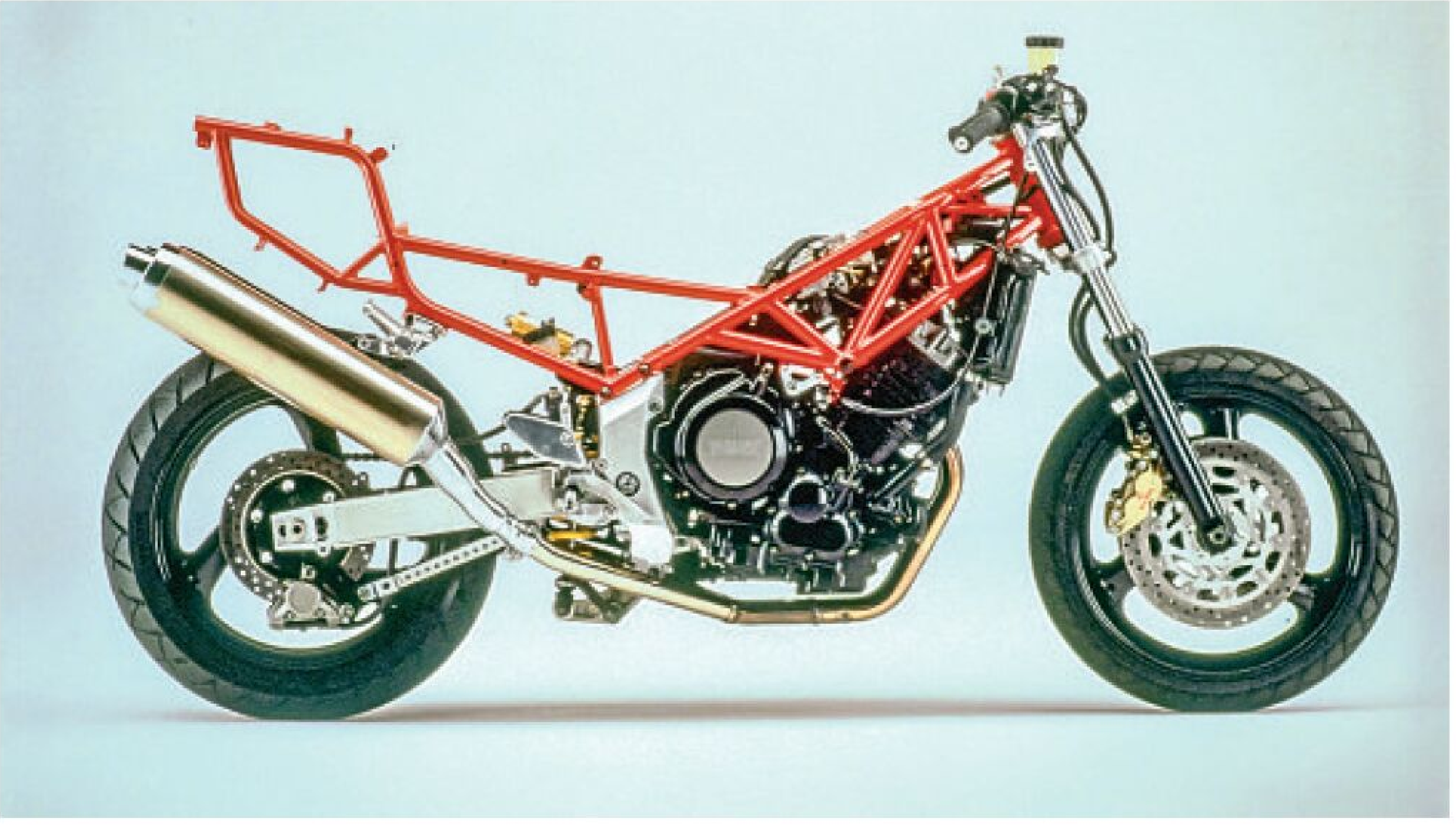
Photography by Patrick Gosling

FOR ALL ITS TWO-STROKE RD350LC HERITAGE, Yamaha is the Japanese company most closely wedded to the performance four-stroke, twin-cylinder format. And its ultimate manifestation for many fans is the TRX850 sports twin launched exactly 30 years ago in 1995 on the Japanese home market. That's when 'Trixie' Yamaha followed her ring-ding sister 'Elsie' onto the two-wheeled design catwalk – so Trixie, This Is Your Life.

Long before it conceived today's best-selling MT-07 line-up, Yamaha has regaled customers for the past half-century with an array of twin-cylinder road bikes around the globe. Models like the XS650, the XS500 which was the first eight-valve Japanese twin, the spectacular failure that was the TX750 despite being the first bike ever to be adorned with vibe-sapping twin counter-balancers, the XV920/TR-1 range of un-Italian V-motors, and the strong-selling Super Ténéré and TDM850 dirt-derived road models all made the House of the Tuning Forks the world's leading provider of motorcycles with a distinctive personality, and no more and no less than two cylinders. But best of all for its many diehard followers today was the TRX850, of which it is believed that about 20,000 examples were built between 1995 and 1999.

During 1994, word got out that Yamaha was developing a twin-cylinder sportbike based on its TDM850 Adventure

Japan-only '95 first year colours – remind you of anything?

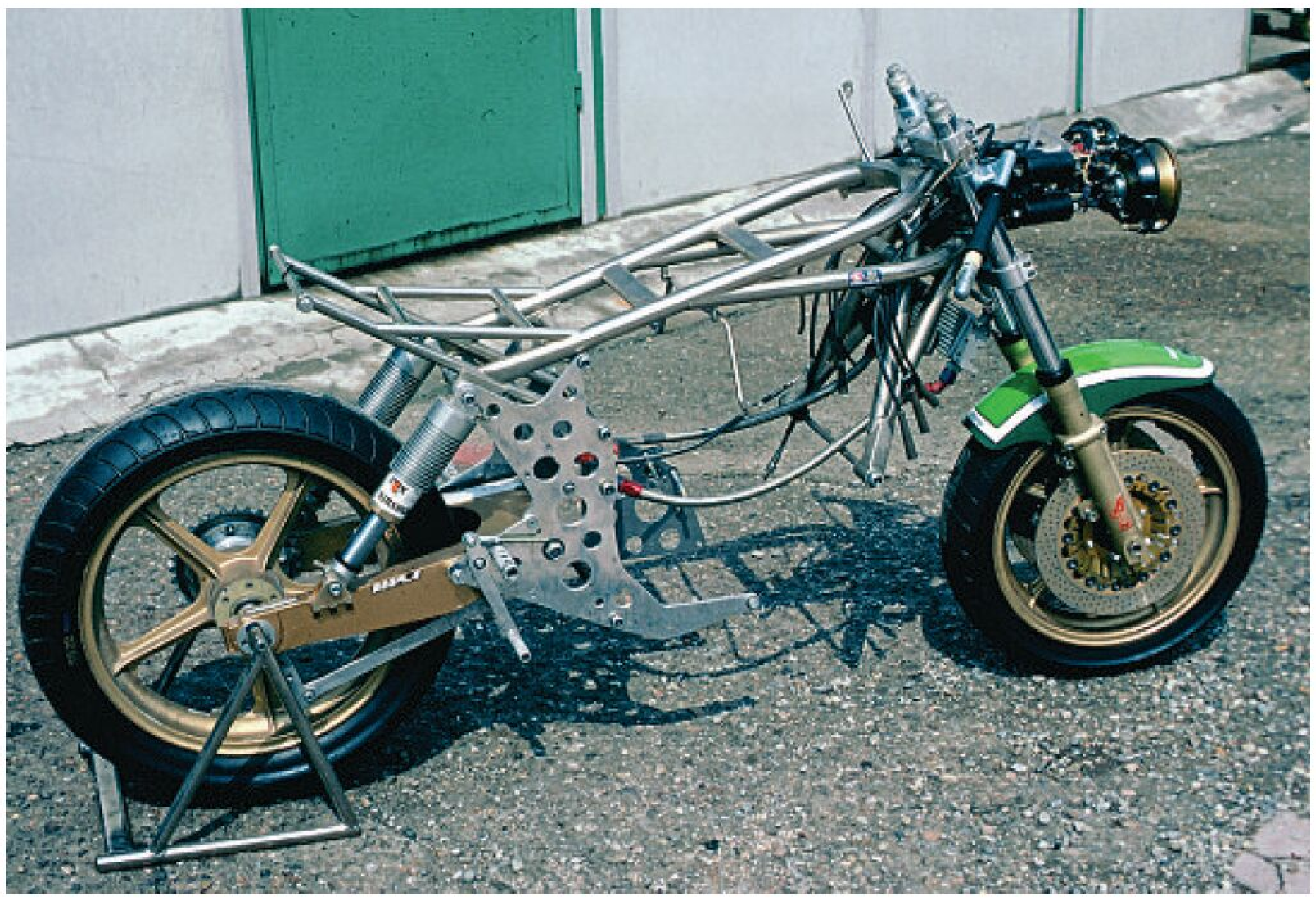


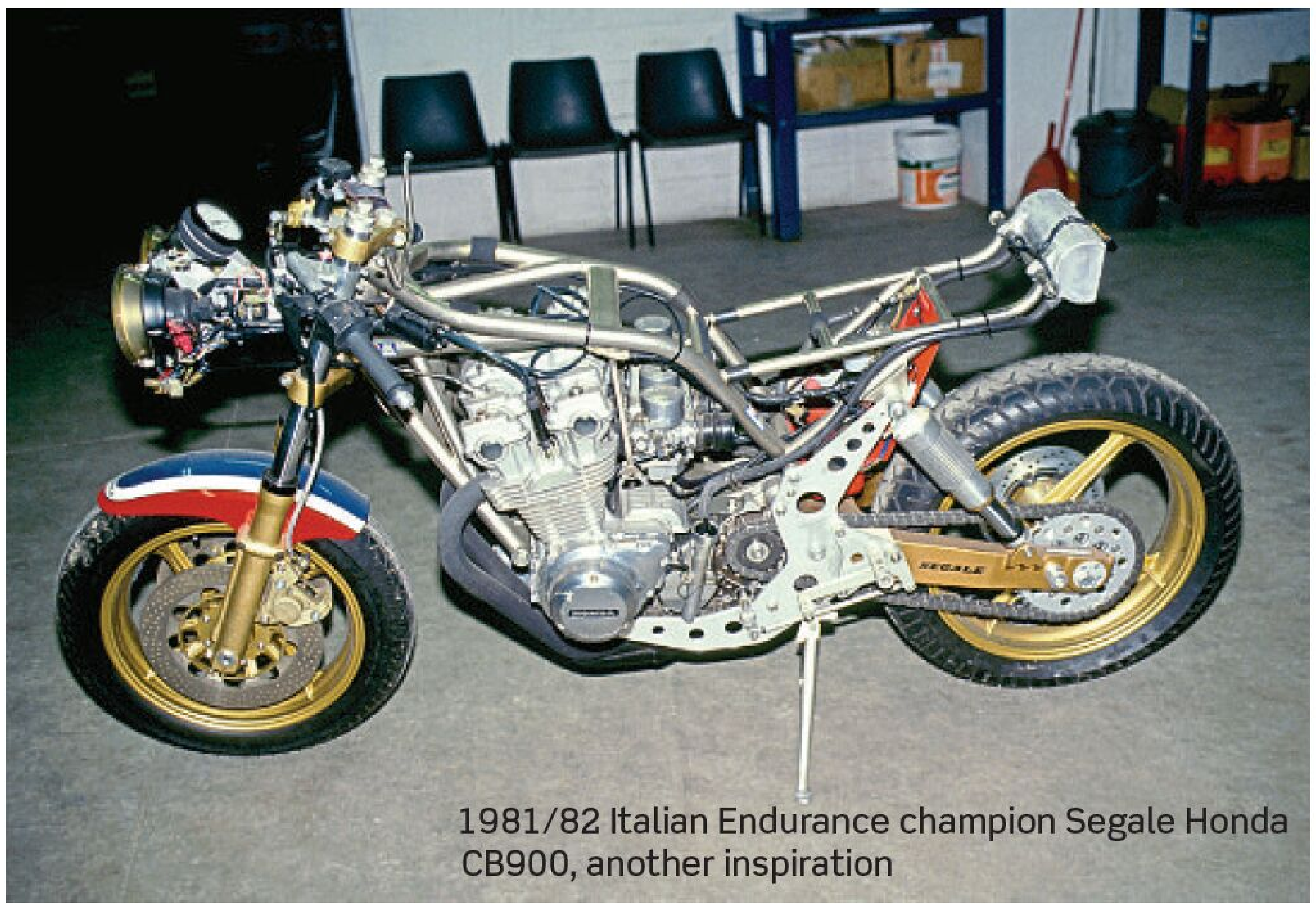
Sports 'street trailie' to create a less costly but distinctive competitor to the Ducati 900SS, then selling especially strongly in Japan. It did so by re-engineering the TDM's DOHC slant-block, 10-valve parallel-twin motor internally, to mimic a Ducati's tractable temperament by rephasing the crank throw from the TDM's two-up, 360-degree Britbike format to a then-unique 270-degree guise, delivering in effect the same character as a 90-degree V-twin. In this it copied Stéphane Peterhansel's YZE850 desert racer, which in 1991-93 he took to a hat-trick of Paris-Dakar victories – an engine format whose 270-degree crank gave him the same off-road traction on loose surfaces as offered by the 90-degree V-twin Ducati motor in the Cagiva Elefant that his rival Edi Orioli had won the Dakar on in 1990. The YZE850's rally-winning rideability was now translated to the street.

Launched as a Japan market-only model in March 1995 – followed two years later by the Honda VTR1000 Firestorm and Suzuki TL1000S – the TRX850 was that long-awaited product from Japan Inc, an accessible twin-cylinder sportsbike with heaps of personality, practical enough for everyday use but sufficiently exciting to get the juices flowing on road or track. Known internally by its Project 005 tag, the TRX850 created by the Yamaha R&D team headed by Hirosuke Negishi was a baseline sports model, delivering performance and handling for the common man at an affordable price, which you could appreciate without feeling intimidated or overawed by the bike's hyper-potential. It was a bike to enjoy rather than to master, with the option to enhance its spec via the aftermarket as money and inclination allowed.

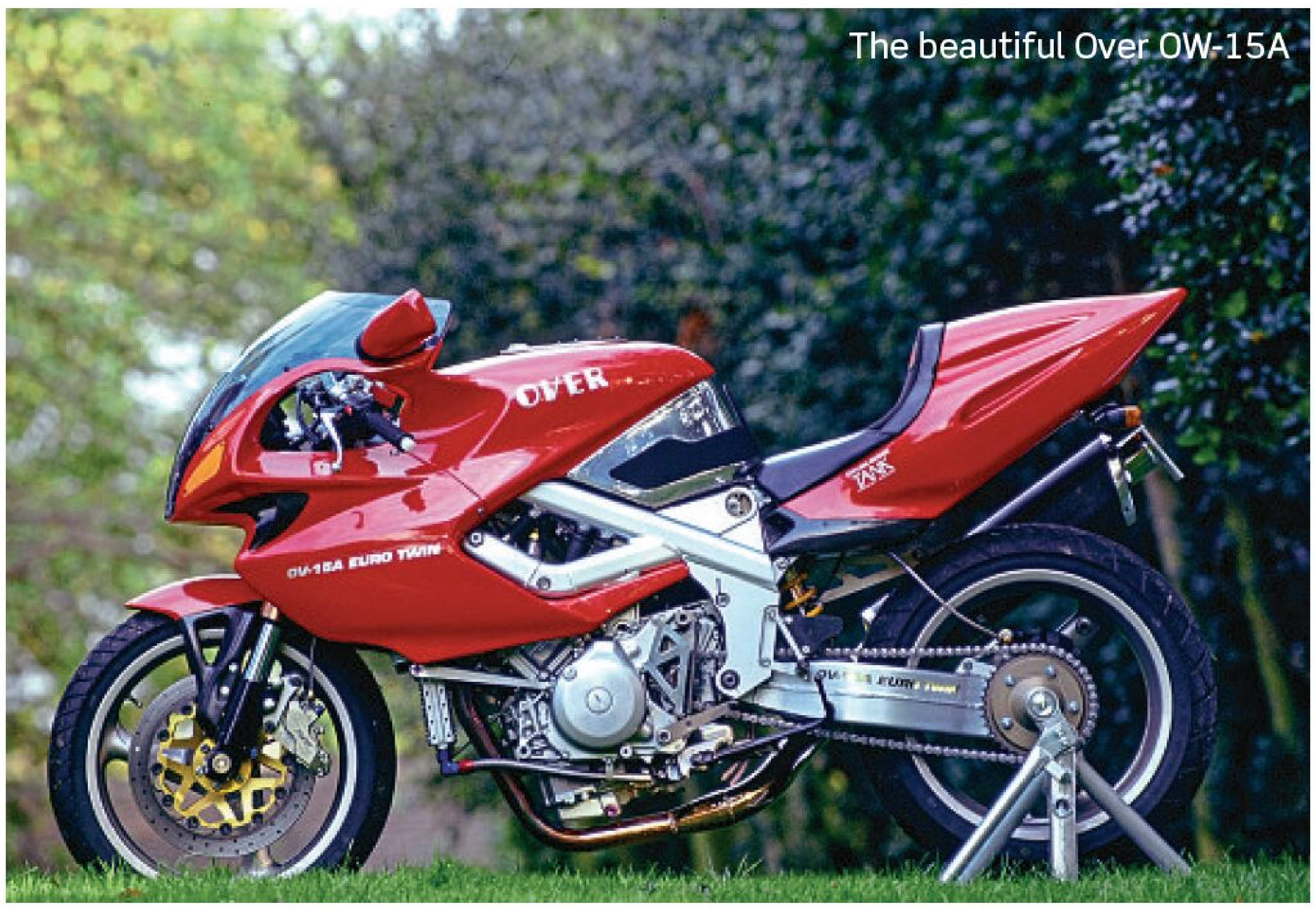
Powered by its British-style parallel-twin motor rather than the 90-degree V-twin Latin layout its Honda and Suzuki counterparts later copied, the TRX was Yamaha's counter-attack to the increasing popularity of European sports twins in Japan. But with the 90-degree crank in a parallel-twin format, it offered the best of both worlds. Thus, it featured the grunt and rideability of a V-twin in the more compact, contained architecture of a parallel-twin which, as well as providing superior handling thanks to the longer swingarm, optimum weight distribution and shorter wheelbase permitted by the more compact motor, was also less costly to manufacture, thus helping Yamaha hold the price down. The same considerations account for the slew of so-called 'inline twins' in the marketplace today, almost all with 270-degree cranks, just like 'Trixie.'

The TRX850 was inspired by the ingenious, good-looking, limited-edition café racer created earlier by Kensei Sato, whose Over Racing shop at Suzuka was umbilically linked to the back door of Yamaha's factory racing division for more than 20 years. Among the succession of factory-backed Yamaha specials emanating from his workshop over that period was the TDM850-engined

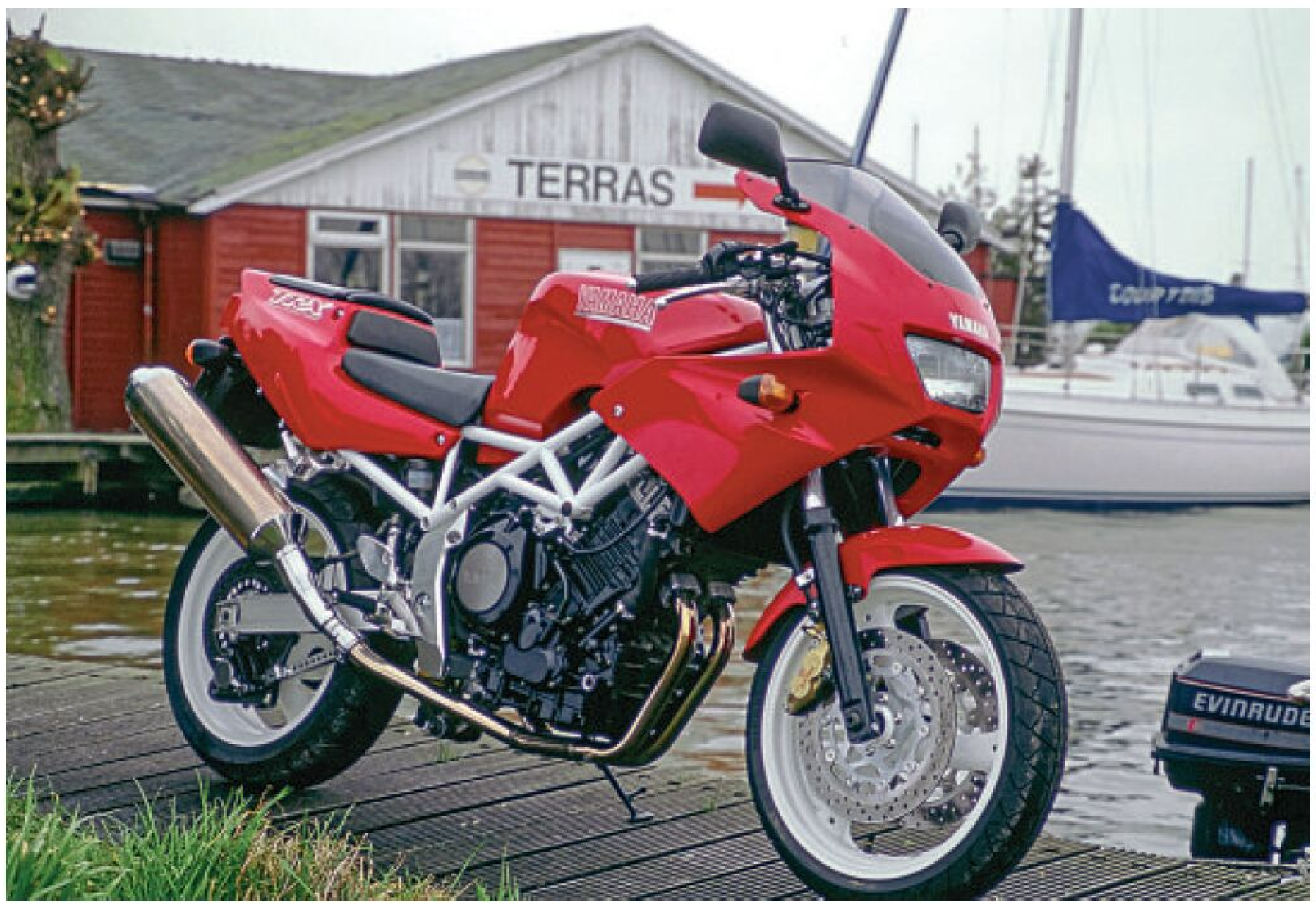




1981/82 Italian Endurance champion Segale Honda CB900, another inspiration



The beautiful Over OW-15A



> ***"...by re-engineering the TDM's DOHC slant-block, 10-valve parallel-twin motor internal, to mimic a Ducati's tractable temperament by rephasing the crank throw from the TDM's two-up, 360-degree Britbike format to a then-unique 270-degree guise."***

OV-15 on which Over's ace rider, Shin Ohura, failed by half a wheel (officially 0.02sec) to wrest victory from Andrew Stroud on the V-twin Britten in the uber-prestigious Assen ProTwins race in 1992, after a race-long duel Ohura led out of the final chicane, only for the more powerful Britten to out-accelerate him to the line, with the bevy of customer Ducati 888 Superbikes nowhere. This led Sato to create the dramatically styled TDM850-powered OV-15A Euro Twin road bike producing 102bhp at 9000rpm from its 868cc motor with 1mm-over pistons, fitted in a trademark Over oval-tube aluminium spaceframe with single-sided swingarm. An undisputed star on debut at the 1993 Paris and Birmingham Shows. Sato planned to put the bike into production at Over Racing's British base near Stratford-on-Avon, but after six bikes were delivered to customers in 1994, the project ended owing to cost overruns and logistical issues. It was pretty nice to ride, though….

However, Yamaha bosses had been paying close attention to the positive global reception to the Over TDM so forged ahead with their plans to produce a less costly but still sporty new parallel-twin model. So, the TRX850 duly debuted at the 1994 Tokyo Show, perhaps unfortunately painted red with a white tubular steel spaceframe chassis, which immediately led to accusations that they'd simply cloned their Italian rival's trademark frame format to create a Yamacati. Unfair? Churlish? Well, how about listening to Massimo Tamburini, then chief design guru of the Cagiva Group and the man responsible for the 900SS Ducati that had allegedly been so plagiarised by the Yamaha TXR850? "People seem to think that the tubular spaceframe is a Ducati trademark," he told me in 1995, "whereas it was in fact invented by the British on the John Player Norton, and there have been many specialist chassis constructors since then who have used it on every kind of bike – not least Bimota. I do agree it's a European design concept, but you can't accuse Yamaha of being any more derivative for using it on the TRX than we were in employing a Deltabox chassis on the Cagiva 500GP bike! Anyway, the TRX frame doesn't even resemble the Ducati 900SS, so much as one of Gigi Segale's designs [see photos in selection – AC]. In fact, I have followed the same composite path with the Cagiva F4 Superbike chassis I just completed [later to reach production as the MV Agusta F4 – AC], which like the Yamaha TRX and several Segale models uses an upper spaceframe combined with a lower aluminium engine mount and swingarm pivot!" So there – maybe it's just too bad Yamaha replicated the Ducati's red and white colour scheme on the J-market TRX850.

To create the Trixie engine, Yamaha's Project 005 R&D team took the DOHC 360-degree parallel-twin engine from the TDM850 and adapted it for more sporting use. While retaining the slant-block format, with the cylinders inclined forward at 45 degrees to deliver a healthy degree of downdraught for performance engine tuning, as well as permitting the 849cc motor to be used as a ➡

Can you see the SZR660 in the Over OW-15A?

1995 Assen Dutch Open start – TRX against 888

1995 Abssen Dutch Open winning debut race by 25sec at finish

1995 Assen Over Racing team after debut Dutch Open win

fully stressed chassis member and optimising the 52/48% weight distribution, they revamped the 89.5 x 67.5mm layout internally to deliver the world's first production parallel-twin with a 270-degree crank throw. Since 360 minus 270 equals 90 (trust me – I put new batteries in my calculator), the effect was predictably to deliver the same offbeat lilt to the engine, the same pulsing throb to the power delivery, and the same dose of grunty torque to the back wheel as you get from a 90-degree V-twin – but without the architectural compromises that a wide-angle V2 engine delivers in terms of chassis design, seat height and weight distribution.

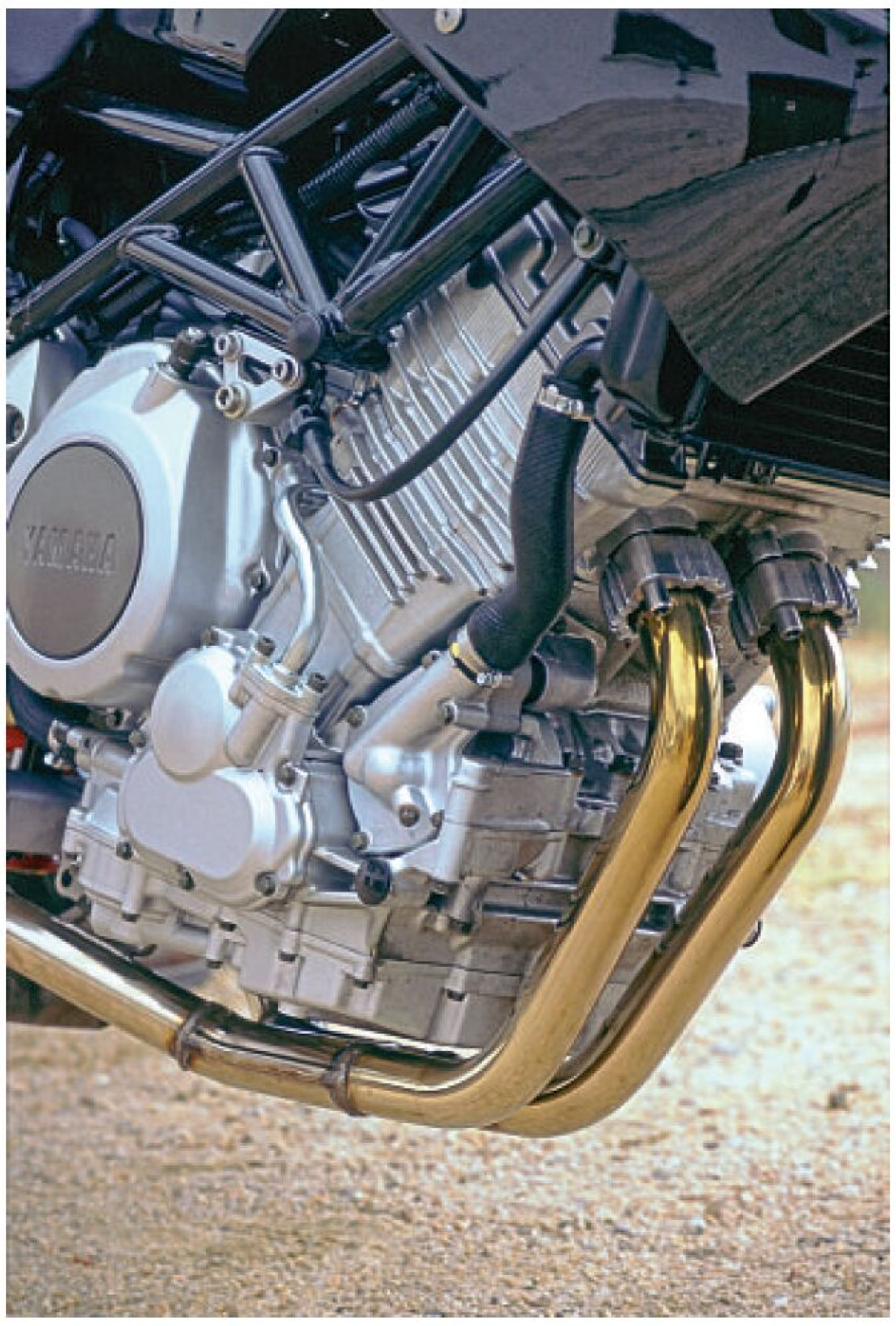
Compared to the TDM's softer tune motor, the Big Bang TRX had increased 10.5:1 compression and a bigger airbox, as well as a peakier inlet camshaft (exhaust was the same) and 14% reduced flywheel mass for quicker pick-up throughout the rev range. The 10-valve cylinder head had the same valve sizes as the TDM – three 26mm inlets and two 28mm exhausts – and the twin gear-driven balance shafts either side of the crank were retained on the 270-degree engine to smooth out vibration without sacrificing character. The five-speed gearbox had a close-ratio gear cluster, while the dry sump engine had an integral cast alloy oil tank centrally located above the gearbox to compact overall mass and aid handling via the longer swingarm the much shorter engine permitted. After first experimenting with flatslides for crisper throttle response, Yamaha settled on a more user-friendly carburettor package, with twin 38mm BDST Mikunis fitted with a TPS throttle position sensor, as well as accelerator pumps. The TPS was part of a three-dimensional mapped electronic CDI, with a trio of sensors varying the ignition timing according to engine revs, carb slide position and throttle operation. Delivering a claimed 83bhp at 7500rpm, the TRX850 was 2bhp more powerful than the TDM, and offered more torque at 62lb.ft at 6000rpm versus the TDM's 59lb.ft.

Having had the pleasure of giving garage space to the Over TDM for a month or so when it visited Europe for the 1993 show season, in return for a bushel-load of miles aboard it, I had a pretty good idea of what Yamaha needed to do to make the TDM engine into a more sporting powerplant – and they'd done it. The TRX850 had a distinctive personality which came alive as soon as you thumbed the starter motor. Instead of the TDM's flat rasp which said Triumph Bonneville rather than Ducati 900SS, Trixie had a trademark lilt to the engine note but still sounded a little smoother and less lumpy than a desmo V-twin – more close-coupled. The lack of a full fairing sent quite a lot of mechanical noise from the top half of the engine upwards to your ears, despite the

First in the 1995 Mallory Park ProTwins

OVER
YAMAHA
99
TRX
YAMAHA
Clubman
Bridgestone

SUPER ANNA
LA VANGUARDIA
Kodak



water-cooling – sometimes it sounded almost as tappety as a pushrod Moto Guzzi! But this all added to the character, underlined by the crisp, offbeat exhaust note from the twin silencers of the rather heavy 2-1-2 system, despite which dry weight was just 188kg dry (a claimed 202kg kerb weight).

There was never really much doubt it would happen, unlike in the USA where Yamaha America opted instead for the failure that was the 1300cc V4 Royal Star cruiser over Trixie, but after a debut year in 1995 when it was sold exclusively in the Japanese home market for which the model was originally conceived, Yamaha Europe took the decision to import the TRX850 sports twin. In making its debut at the 1995 Paris Show in revamped guise for the European market, Trixie Yamaha had also gone native, with an uplift to the original J-market specification wrought by Negishi-san and his team, in the interests

➡

And second in the 1995 Tolbert Dutch Open road race

Winning Dutch Open round at Spa-Francorchamps in '95

1997 defending Sound of Thunder World Series title

First at Daytona in '96 ProTwins Formula 1 with Norm Williams – becoming a habit!

> ***"Following that up with victory in the Formula 1 ProTwins race on the Daytona bankings in Cycle Week 1996 was the icing on the cake, defeating a total of 14 Ducati 916 customer superbikes to do so, after being speed trapped at 169mph. Not bad for a bike with just a half-fairing!"***

of adapting the bike to European riding conditions – as well as a new suit of clothes. Instead of the red and white livery of the J-market model, the TRX850 sold abroad at contained cost – £6800 in Britain, for example, against £7895 for a Ducati 900SS – came either in all black, or red with a black frame or metallic blue with a silver frame, each with the engine painted silver rather than a sombre black, and the three-spoke cast wheels a tasteful grey

As one of the handful of European journalists asked to ride a J-model TRX850 around the windmills of Holland back in freezing February – it was in response to our suggestions that Negishi-san and his crew made the changes they did for Trixie's European launch – the chance to compare and contrast the latest Euro-version of Yamaha's 270-degree Big Twin on a 200-mile ride from Spain's craggy Costa Brava up into the foothills of the Pyrenees was especially rewarding. For I should also declare a further personal interest: Yamaha Europe had asked me to race the only TRX850 to be seen outside Japan in 1995, naturally prepared in Japan by Over Racing. Out of a total of eight International ProTwins races in Europe that season, we won five of them, finished second and third once each, and DNFd just a solitary time with, of all things, a broken bolt in the gear linkage after qualifying on pole for the seventh time out of eight in all. Winning major Battle of the Twins races ahead of 60-bike fields on GP circuits like Spa-Francorchamps and Assen was a real buzz, as well as proving the significant potential of the TRX for performance tuning – for road or track. And following that up with victory in the Formula 1 ProTwins race on the Daytona bankings in Cycle Week 1996 was the icing on the cake, defeating a total of 14 Ducati 916 customer superbikes to do so, after being speed trapped at 169mph. Not bad for a bike with just a half-fairing!

In adapting the stock TRX850 for more forceful, higher speed European riding conditions, Negishi and his team also sharpened Trixie's appeal, starting with the throatier exhaust note from revised silencers, removing the accelerator pumps from the 38mm semi-downdraught Mikuni carbs and gearing the bike up quite substantially by two teeth, with a 39T rear wheel sprocket instead of the J-model's 41T. It'd still pull that tall gearing, though, as a fast run on a deserted freeway confirmed, squatting down under the screen. With toes on footrests and chest resting on the hump of the 18-litre fuel tank in a way that was really comfortable once I'd tweaked the very solid-mounted mirrors down so I could change lanes safely without sitting up, the TRX ran for mile after mile at exactly its 8000rpm redline, equating to 144mph on the speedo. The screen was quite low, so leaning flat on the tank was the best way to avoid windblast at anything over 75mph. That made this a twin that wouldn't get left behind on German autobahns, and it was also comfortable for a long ride, too, thanks to the extra seat padding adopted for the European version. The riding position was still the same as the J-bike, though – the reduced 795mm seat height meant it appealed to riders of a wide variety of different heights, including many women, with the seat/bars/footrests triangle delivering a rational, spacious, real-world stance that had you sitting in the bike rather than on top of it, and it didn't have the flawed footrest position of the Ducati 900SS, which were too far forward and so pushed your knees up too high. The

Specification:
1996 Yamaha TRX850

ENGINE: Water-cooled DOHC 10-valve parallel twin-cylinder four-stroke with chain camshaft drive and 270-degree crankshaft throw **DIMENSIONS:** 89.5 x 67.5mm **CAPACITY:** 849cc **OUTPUT:** 83bhp (61 kW) at 7500rpm (at crankshaft) **MAXIMUM TORQUE:** 83.8Nm / 61.81ft-lb at 6000rpm **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 10.5:1 **CARBURATION:** 2x 38mm Mikuni BDST **IGNITION:** Yamaha CDI with l2v battery **GEARBOX:** Five-speed close ratio **CLUTCH:** Multiplate oil bath **CHASSIS:** Tubular steel spaceframe with cast aluminium swingarm pivot plates and engine utilised as fully stressed chassis component **SUSPENSION:** Front: 41mm telescopic fork adjustable for preload and rebound damping Rear: Extruded aluminium swingarm with fully adjustable monoshock and progressive rate link **HEAD ANGLE/TRAIL:** 25 degrees/100mm **WHEELBASE:** 1435mm **WEIGHT/DISTRIBUTION:** 190kg dry, split 52/48% static **BRAKES:** Front: 2x 298mm Yamaha floating discs with four-piston Sumitomo calipers Rear: 1x 245mm Yamaha fixed steel disc with two-piston Sumitomo caliper **WHEELS/ TYRES:** Front: 120/60-17 Michelin Macadam on 3.75in cast aluminium wheel Rear: 160/60-17 Michelin Macadam on 5.50in cast aluminium wheel **TOP SPEED:** 225km/h / 140mph**YEARS OF MANUFACTURE:** 1995-99 **MANUFACTURER:** Yamaha Motor Company, Iwata, Japan

Yamaha felt quite compact and light to steer without being twitchy, aided by the narrow 160/60-17 rear tyre and despite being an inevitably bulkier parallel-twin design compared to a V-twin.

But the Yamaha's motor had its own distinct personality, with a smooth, linear power delivery, pulling from as low as 2000rpm on part-throttle without any snatch or 3000rpm wide open hard on the gas. From about 4500 it really got going, with the 89.5 x 67.5mm engine raising revs quickly but controllably to deliver peak power of 83bhp at 7500rpm – but that's not to say it was all midrange like a 900SS. Instead, the Yamaha built power progressively all the way through the rev range and even beyond: it had an appetite for revs that would send the tacho needle off the clock at 9000rpm in the gears without the power falling off too steeply before finding the soft rev limiter soon after there. Using the sweet-shifting five-speed gearbox with its wide-ish spaced ratios (1000 revs between third and fourth and 1200rpm from fourth to top) to keep the revs high up was a real pleasure – but don't imagine the TRX was peaky and inflexible. I found I could hold the bike in third gear for miles on end through countless turns along a twisty coast road, some little more than walking pace, interspersed with short straights. It was a bike which allowed you to ride it as your mood dictated. The gear-change was very crisp, too, despite the long link to the selector mounted high up, presumably in the interests of rotating the gearshafts in order to further compact the mass.

Though there were a few vibes at high revs through the footrests, the twin counterbalancers did their job well enough to leave only the tingles that delight and add character to the bike together with the unique offbeat lilt to the rortier exhausts from the 270-degree motor. I've been told that my race bike sounded completely different from the flock of 90-degree V-twins it usually shared the track with – and it certainly felt different to ride, too. Only the pick-up from low revs was a bit disappointing on the street TRX; I was sure Yamaha had fitted a different ignition curve from the J-model, but Negishi-san said not. However, the initial pick-up from a closed throttle exiting a turn at 2000-3000rpm was rather jerky, as if the lack of accelerator pumps hadn't been compensated for correctly. Not enough to spoil enjoyment, though – and as a short rain shower duly confirmed, this was one of the world's great wet-weather motorcycles thanks to its torquey, tractable nature.

Yamaha made more changes to the chassis for Europe than they did to the mechanical package, stiffening both the 41mm conventional fork that was adjustable for preload and rebound damping in delivering 120mm of wheel travel and the fully adjustable rear shock with 130mm of travel, while retaining the same link on the progressive rate rear suspension and employing Michelin Macadam tyres

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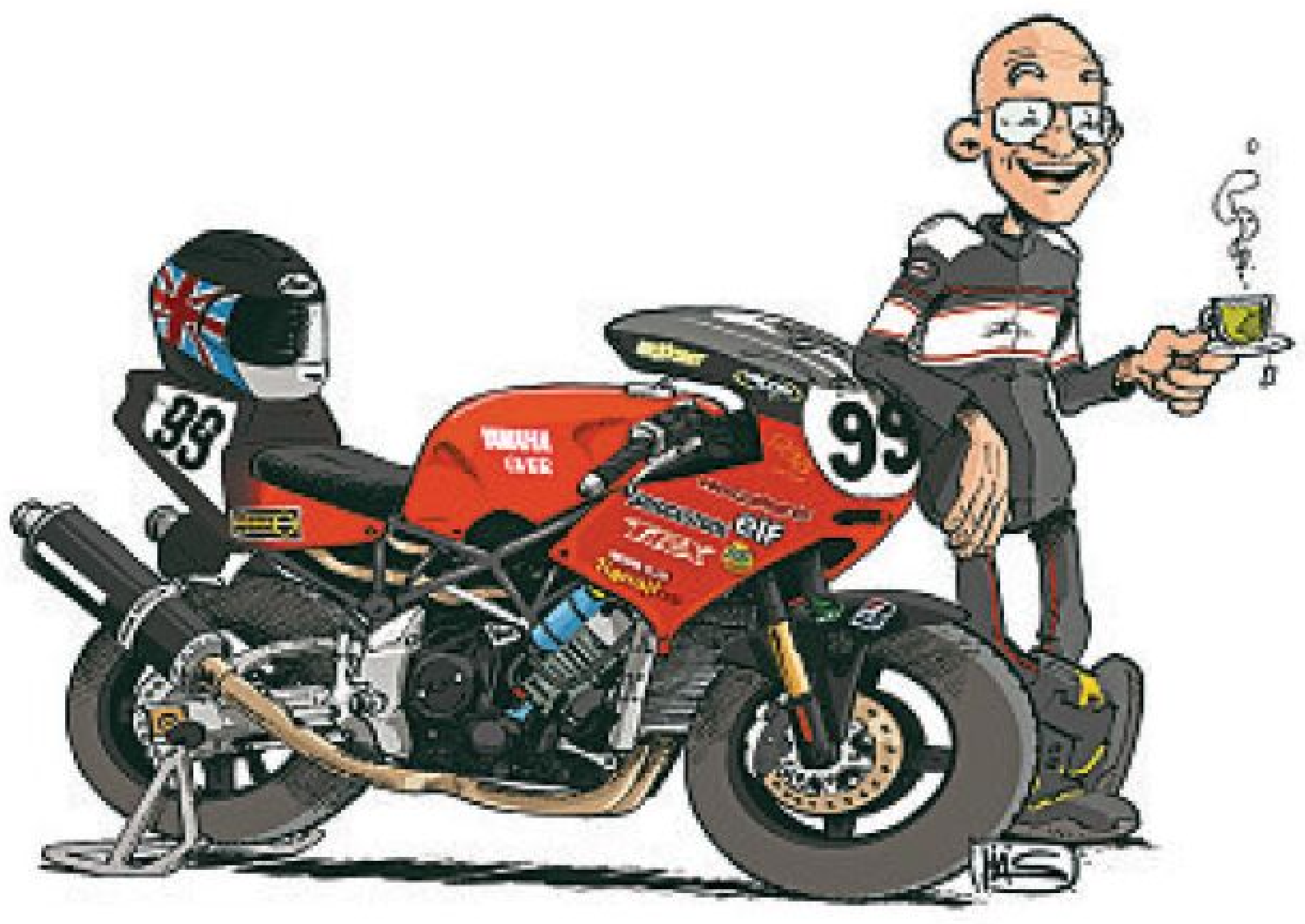
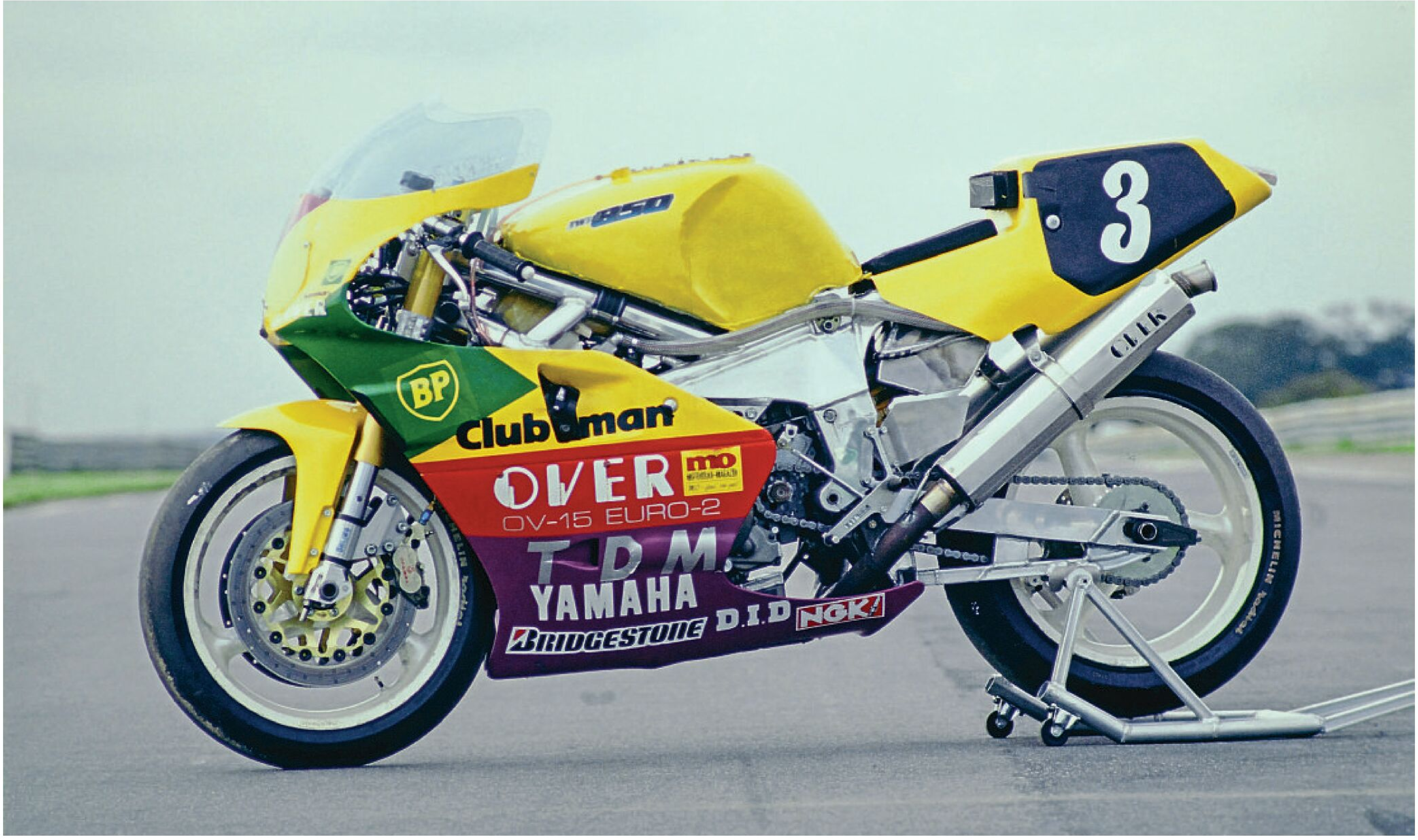


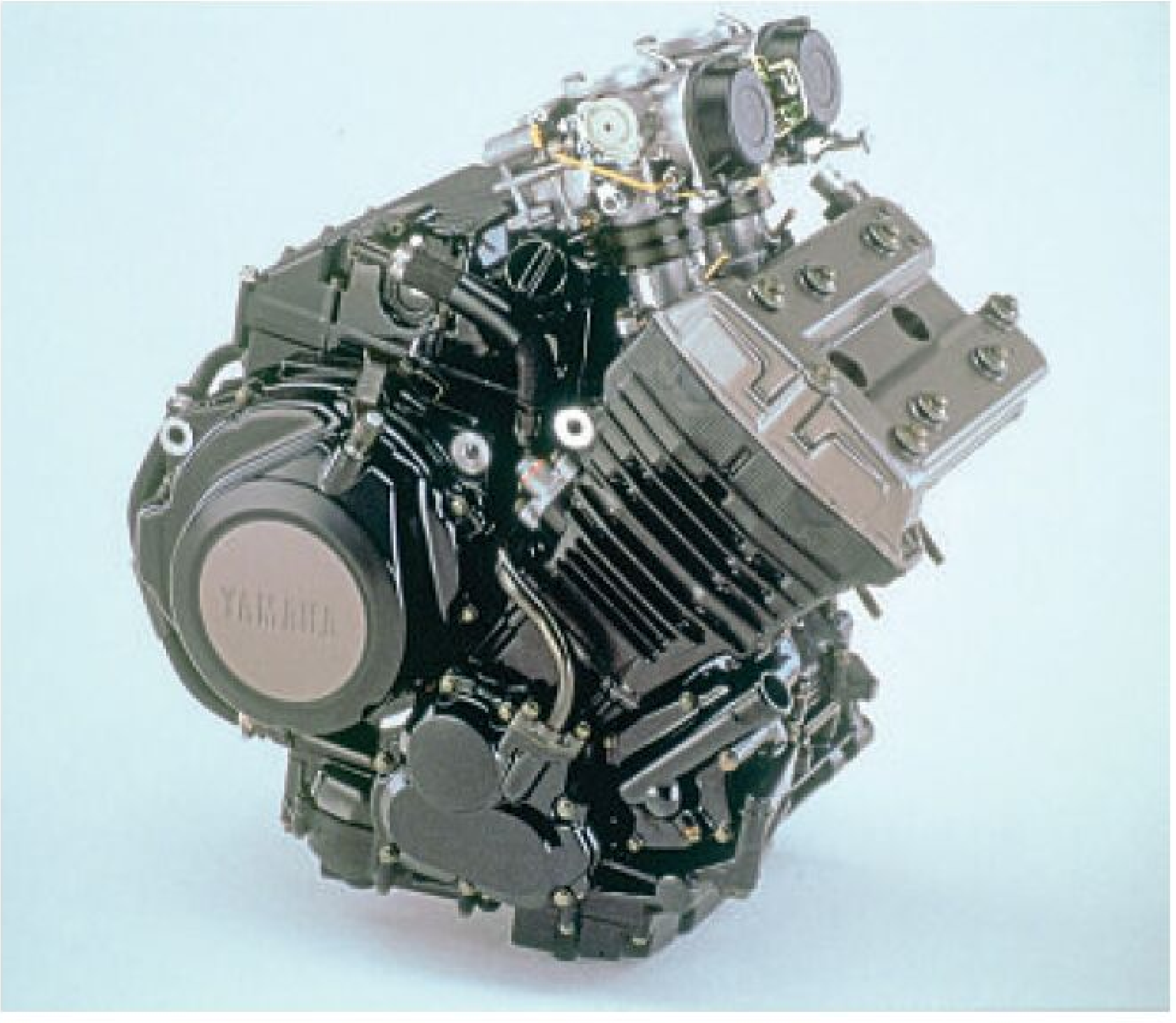
The original OV-15 racer that inspired it all

YAMAHA
TRX
OVER



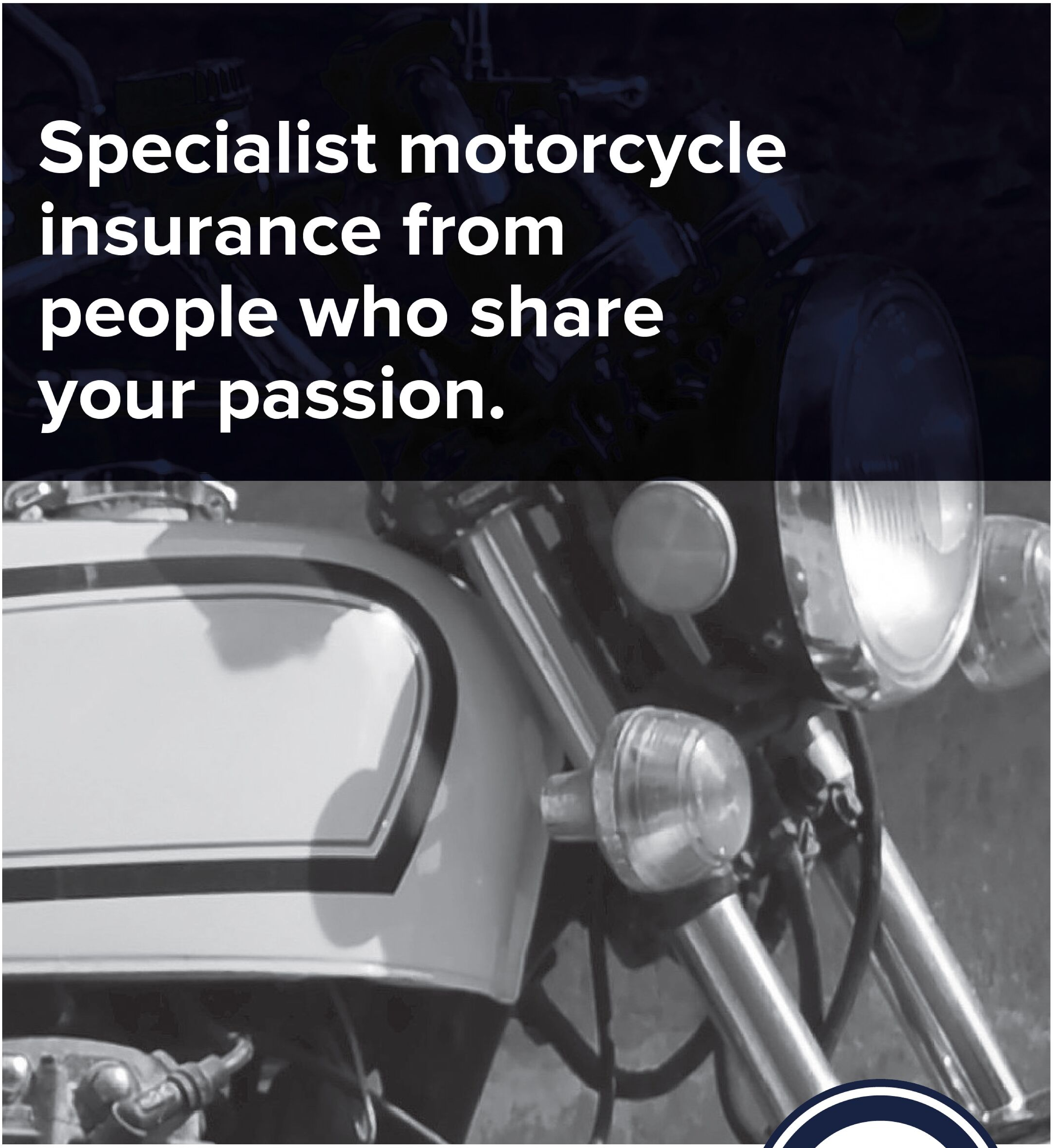
Tamburini, who was happy to deny Yamaha had copied Ducati 900SS frame

rather than the TX Hi-Sports fitted for Japan. That was supposedly to improve stability, but I suspect it was really that their tread pattern and construction were more suitable for everyday use in all kinds of weather. The composite spaceframe chassis delivered stable, forgiving handling that required a little bit of effort to make the bike change direction even with the shortish 1435mm wheelbase – but not so much it ever stopped being fun to ride. You had to work just hard enough to make riding the TRX satisfying – but it was also practical, with a 64-degree steering lock and fairly light clutch action, making it ideal for town work.



Despite having stiffer damping than the J-model, the conventional fork set at a 25-degree rake with 99mm of trail gave good ride quality, with no patter or chatter at quite respectable corner speeds over different surfaces, and not too much dive under the excellent braking offered by the four-pot Sumitomo calipers gripping the upsized 298mm front discs – the J-bike had only 266mm front brakes and a tiny 214mm rear. Fitting Japanese brakes to the Euro-bike instead of the Brembos on the J-version was quite a switch, apparently made to improve feel, according to Negishi! In terms of power, I felt Trixie braked pretty much the same with the Sumitomos as it'd done before in Holland with the Italian stoppers. These worked okay without offering as much bite as I preferred, which was, however, present with the Sumitomos, so Negishi-san was right. The brake lever was adjustable for reach, but you needed quite a strong squeeze to dial in heavy braking, like when José in his old SEAT pick-up amber-gambled on me, and a panic stop was called for while cruising gently over a light that had just turned green! The upsized 245mm rear brake was quite strong, though apart from said panic stop I only used it cranked over in the middle of a turn to pull the bike upright for a straighter, harder drive out, when it was a little difficult to get the right degree of sensitivity. Still, Jay Springsteen would have been proud of my rear wheel drifts – or maybe not....

Ducati did Yamaha a big favour by delaying the debut of its heavily revamped Pierre Terblanche-styled 900SS until the 1998 model year it finally appeared in. This gave Yamaha a vital chink in the Twinsports market that the TRX850 was able to take full advantage of – especially at such a favourable price. Because despite having been originally engineered for the different requirements of the Japanese market, the TRX850 was that then rare thing: a Japanese bike with soul that was also truly one of a kind – as well as way ahead of its time. Not surprisingly, it's increasingly acquiring a cult following as an easy-to-ride sportbike with few vices that's both rewarding and accessible to ride and which responds well to tuning. Like the showbiz mantra goes, it's taken Trixie 30 years to become an overnight success! CBG



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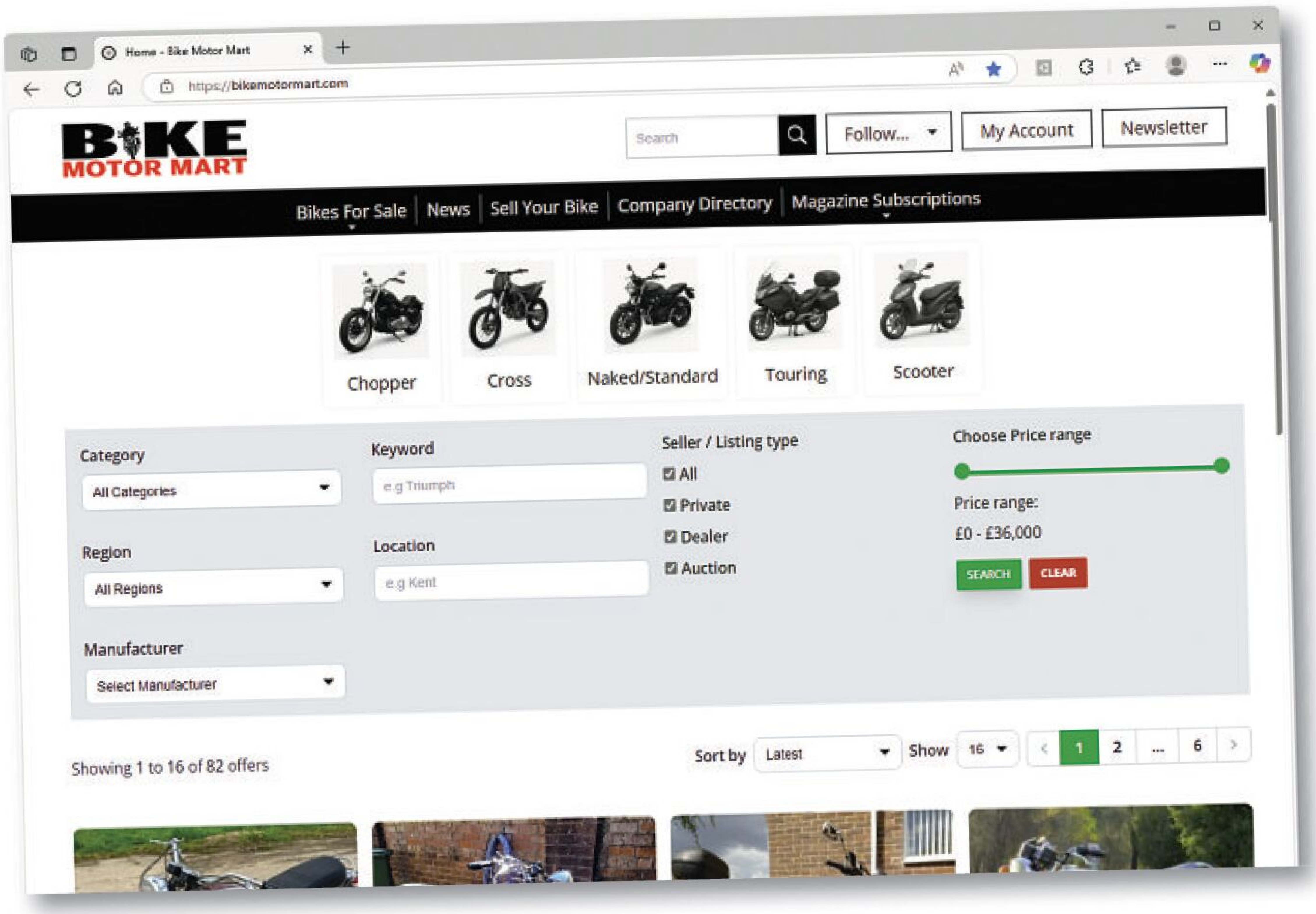
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58 500 "Venom" Electric Start, Black	£7995
65 192cc LE Gray	£POA
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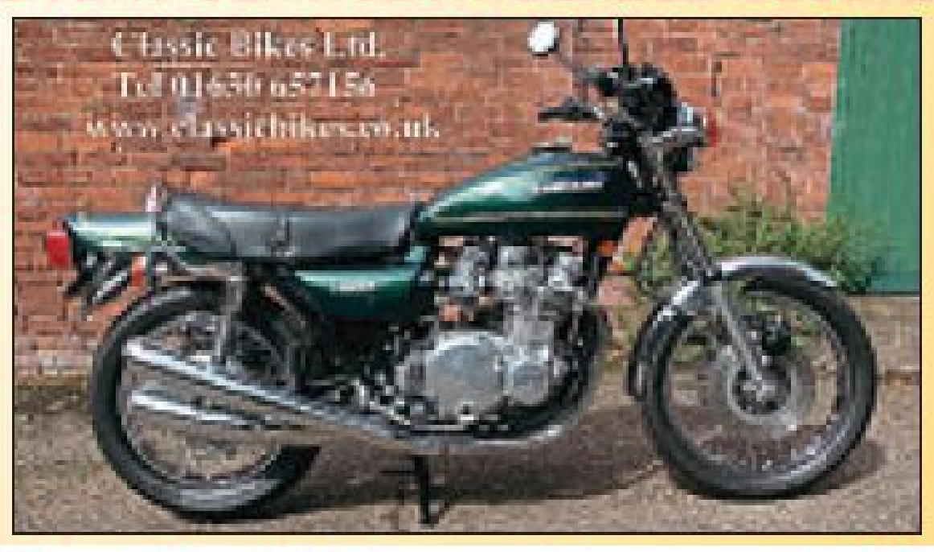

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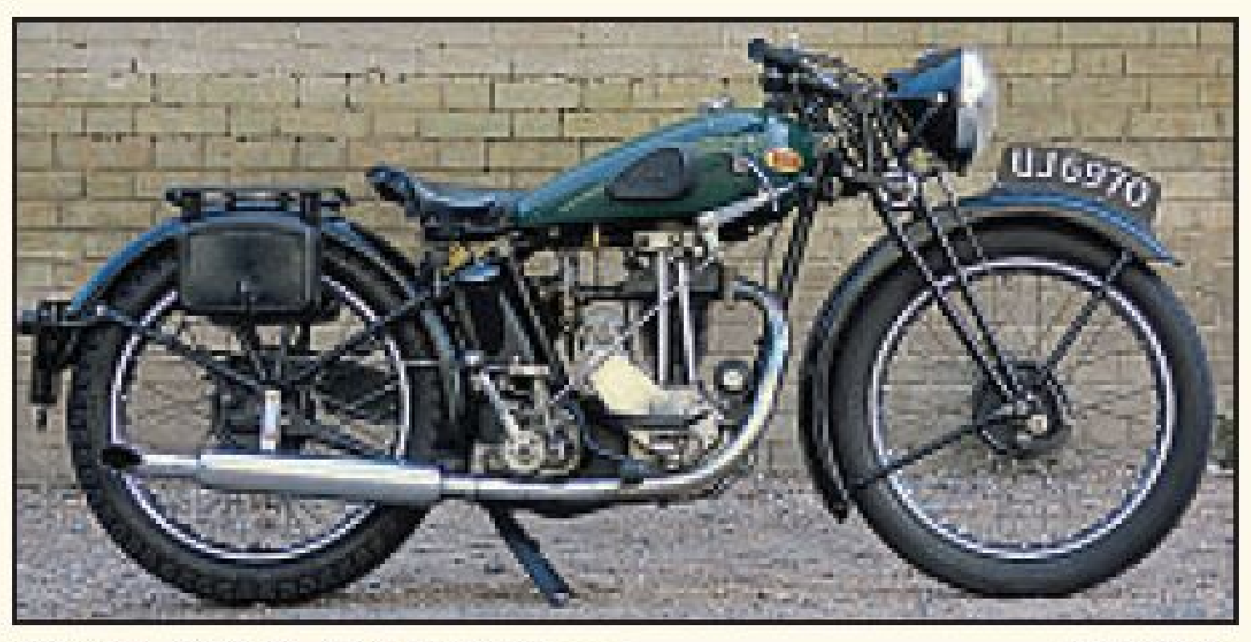
Est. 1972

1935 BSA X0 150cc........................£4,250



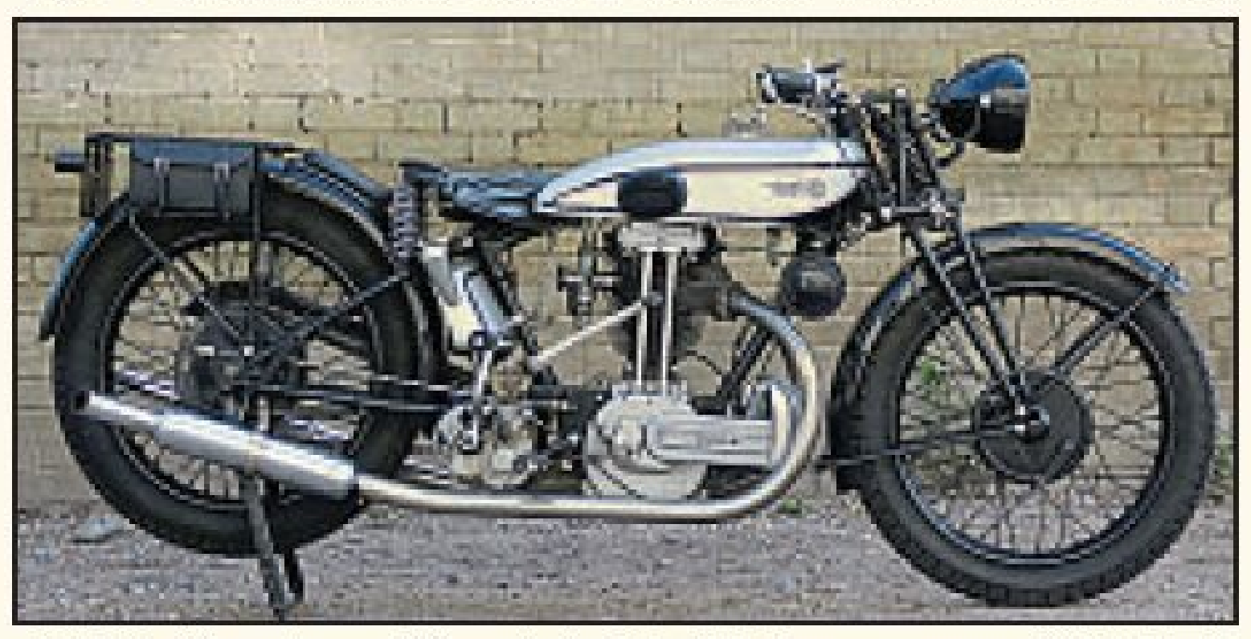
1936 BSA B18 250cc........................£POA

1952 BSA B31 350cc........................£5250

1959 BSA C15 250cc........................£2850

1941 Matchless G3L 350cc £4250

1959 Matchless G12 650cc..............£3350



1930 Norton Model 20 500cc £12750

1956 Rough Inferior 775cc £9750

1950 Royal Enfield 125cc £1500

1963 Triumph 3TA 350cc................ £3,500

1956 Triumph T100 500cc £5000

1937 Velocette MOV 248cc £4650

1957 AJS 16MS 350cc 2 owners from new	**£2750**
1936 AJS 36/2 1000cc rare commercial model with reverse gear	**£18,500**
1947 ARIEL NH 350cc an exciting project	**£3250**
1958 ARIEL VH 500cc last year of production	**£3650**
1935 BSA X0 150cc sweet little bike	**£4250**
1965 BSA Bantam D7 175cc untouched	**£1650**
1936 BSA B18 250cc nice in green	**£POA**
1955 BSA C11G 250cc choice of 2	**£2500**
1959 BSA C15 250cc lovely in green	**£2850**
1970 BSA Starfire 250cc very smart lots of money spent	**£2350**
1952 BSA B31 350cc nice original super history	**£5250**
1948 BSA B33 500cc tele rigid gorgeous!	**£5500**
1937 BSA H15 500cc ohv lovely rare v-twin	**£25,500**
1937 BSA G14 1000cc well presented	**£18,650**
1952/57 EXCELSIOR Talisman Twin 250cc choice of 2	**£2650/£3250**
1935 MATCHLESS F4 prototype 250cc prototype suspension	**£6350**
1935 NEW IMPERIAL 150cc choice of 2	**£3500/£2750**
1928 NEW IMPERIAL Model 7 500cc handsome machine	**£5250**
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1959 ROYAL ENFIELD Crusader Airflow 250cc Enfield fairing	**£2650**
1965 ROYAL ENFIELD Interceptor 750cc lovely machine	**£5350**
1924 SCOTT 532cc Lovely 2 Speed Combination	**£11,500**
1931 SUNBEAM 9 493cc lovely machine **REDUCED**	**£8500**
1969 TRIUMPH TR25W 250cc extensive work done lots of bills	**£3250**
1963 TRIUMPH 3TA 350cc great bath tub	**£3500**
1949 TRIUMPH 5T 500cc nice sprung hub	**£5850**
1913 TRIUMPH C 500cc lovely Pioneer machine	**£9650**
1956 TRIUMPH T100 500cc nice looking	**£5000**
1957 TRIUMPH T110 650cc lovely machine	**£5850**
1937 VELOCETTE MOV 250cc great patina	**£4650**
1947 VELOCETTE MAC 350cc nice one	**£5850**

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BMW Chopper

1979, £7,000, Trophy-winning, Isle of Man themed chopper based on BMW R65m many unique parts, custom paint and decoration. Please call 01539741341. Kendal
1328

BMW K1200S

2005, £3,750, excellent condition, 31,500 miles, MoT 3/26, garaged, serviced, history file, BMW panniers and tank bag. Please call 01744818644
1117

BMW R100/RS

1977, £3,300, good condition two owners, no offers, no time wasters. Coventry. Please call 02476593567. West Midlands
1146

BMW R12 Combination

1939, £24,000, 1939, 750cc sidevalve, rare WW2 military outfit, all running but will need recommissioning due to standing, V5C, viewing welcome, can deliver if required. Please call 07798866071
1068

BMW R60/2 Combination

£13,500, 1964, 600cc, in excellent condition paired to a Steib sidecar, BEMW Serviced, V5C. Please call 07798866071
1280

BSA Barracuda

£2,500, 1967, matching nos, easy starter, wee bit of money spent on it, swop for Honda 175. Please call 07511619810
1371

BSA Victor-Special

1970, white and red, stainless wheels, guards, rebuilt engine, fantastic condition, frames BSA B40, Triumph 350/500 with V5. BSA unit/single competition, all powder coated. Triumph 350 project, T90 spec engine, V5, £5750. Please call 01709876651
1121

Book

Dreaming of Jupiter, hardback book by Ted Simon retracing his earlier journey round the world this time on modified BMW R80 GS, book in very good condition, 435 pages, £12, can post. Please call 07852921265
1066

Harley-Davidson Sidecar body

1936 upwards, complete with seats, arm rests, spare wheel carrier and original screen and mudguard in good condition, this is original not a copy, £3500 no chassis may exchange classic motorbike with or without sidecar or WHY? East London ring for photo. Please call 07863262603
1278

Honda

£350, Skyteam Ace 125, 2018, good condition, 6400 miles. Please call 01934903168
1367

Honda C72 250 Dream

1964, £2,400, 1964, UK bike, 3 owners from new, 12 volt, electric and kick start, starts, runs goes through the gears etc, speedo shows 300 miles which is unlikely to be right, bit oily rag condition, so either ride or restore, some engine work done, V5C present, £2400 ono Please call 07876704268, Norfolk
1310

Honda CB175

1972, £2,400, very good condition, 6102 miles, imported by David Silver in 2018, service records from Ohio suggest mileage is correct. Please call 01934353215
929

Honda CB400/4SS

1975, front mudguard complete with stays, sound condition, average chrome, £40. Harley-Davidson silencers, from late Sportsters 45mm bore, as new, £50. Please call 01297 489578
1119

Honda CB500

2002, £600, project bike, good condition, need some bobs to be done, engine good, everything works, all panels, tyres, lights ok, paperwork A1, need smaller bike. Please call 02920883315
934

Honda CB500 Four

1971, gold and black, new paintwork, rebuilt wheels, good chrome, original tulip exhausts, £6500. Also Honda CB750, 1970, rebuilt, candy gold, new wheels, excellent chrome, stunning condition, £14,750. Please call 01709876651
1120

Honda CB500 Twin

1998, £1,050, Honda CB500 Twin, 1998, unmolested tidy condition, 41,355 miles, new battery, fresh oil and filter and fork seal, tyres brakes, chain and sprockets good, fresh MoT, workshop manual, ideal commuter or leisure classic, spare engine by negotiation. Email. kbc_531@hotmail.co.uk Please call 01530 610377, Leicestershire
1245

Honda VF1000FE

26,000 km (approx 16,000 miles). Registered as historic, brand new Bridgestone tyres and rear shock absorber, ridden 120 miles since recommissioning, £2250, sensible offers considered. Please call 07964857515
937

MZ TS250

1976-1982 job lot front brake, back plate and spinner, rear hub and sprocket, refurbished swing arm + chain adjusters. Also Haynes Manual Kawasaki Z200 and KL250 singles, £10. Please call 07812217467
936

Manual

Factory A100 AS100 manual, tatty cover but good inside, £20 can post. Also many Haynes manuals and seat covers for small motorbikes 70's 80's. Please call 07852921265
1279

Manuals

Clymer for BMW airheads R Series, 1970 to 1994 including GS, a massive book 775 pages, £25. Haynes for Honda Deauville 06 to '13, Transalp 08 to '13, £12. Both used but good. Heyco pliers from my old R65 toolkit may suit others. £8, can post. Please call 07852921265
1065

OWENS MOTORCYCLES

BSA A10 Road Rocket/Super Rocket/RGS replica rest projects for sale. Please call for more details .. £

BSA B44 / BSA C15 Scrambler/Trials bikes for restoration, please call for more details .... £POA

CCM 404 DS dual sport 400cc fantastic bike, great condition, must be seen, 2006.......................... £3495

Honda C70 Cub 70cc, good condition, runs/rides well, tax and MOT exempt, V5C, 1972...................... £1295

Honda MTX200R great bike, very original, low miles, good runner, must be seen, V5C 1985 .... £1795

Honda CJ360T, very nice condition, must be seen, low mileage, lots of history, V5C, 1978 .... £1995

James ML 125cc lovely thing, very original, must be seen, NOVA docs, 1947.................................... £2495

Norton P11 project 750cc, matching engine/frame, must be seen, rare bike, 1967 .... £4295

Royal Enfield WD/CO 350cc, matching engine and frame numbers, must be seen, Nova docs £2495

Triumph Speed Twin sprung hub, 500cc, lovely orig cond, starts/runs/rides fine, original number, V5C, 1952... £6995

Triumph TR5T Trophy Trail 500cc rest project, matching numbers, 99% complete, import docs, 1973 .... £3995

Velocette LE 200cc hand start, hand change, been stood many years, all complete, old logbook RF60, 1952 .... £695

Vincent Amanda water scooter, very nice condition, rare twin cylinder model, must be seen £3295

Yamaha DT250 Enduro, lovely original condition, low mileage, matching no's, must be seen, V5C, 1978 .. £3795

Yamaha MX100 beautifully restored matching nos, lovely bike runs great must be seen 1980 .... £1800

Yamaha Virago 535, good condition, ideal first big bike, easy to ride, ready for summer, 2002 .... £1095

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Matchless G2 CSR

1964, 1964, 250cc, £2150 ono. Please call 01934811449
1116

Montesa Cota 247

1978, £1,200, 1978, good overall condition, ready to trial or play, new sprockets, chain, NJB shocks, seat, wheel bearings and fork seals, wheels rebuilt by Central Wheel, no V5. Please note previous listing had mistyped phone number. Please call 01215303120. West Midlands
1109

Norton Commando

1971, £5,500, 1971, black and gold, owned six years, good condition, 24,000 miles, 5000 in my ownership, nearly £2000 spent, forks, carb, tyres, Halogen bulb, brake shoes, stiffening plate etc. Please call 07772880323
1382

Norton Jubilee

1961, £1,800, 1961, lightweight twin, 250cc, many new parts fitted, a few years ago, including new tyres, speedo, respoked wheels, etc, original reg no and matching engine frame numbers. Please call 01484656196
1122

Baglux Tank Bag

£25, 1990's/2000's which will fit any Baglux tank covers, great condition, Perspex top for map reading etc. Please call 01706843102
933

Royal Enfield 250 Clipper

1955, £2,500, good condition for year, good tyres, Sorned, spare rear mudguard and stays, too heavy for me now. Please call 07974862441
925

Royal Enfield 350 Bullet

2007, £2,500, excellent condition, not yet run in, 305klm, Sorned, good tyres, too heavy for me now. Please call 07974862441
926

Royal Enfield 650 Interceptor

£2,750, 70 reg, 12,000 miles, good condition, engine crash bar, choice of seats, N cat, but sold with 12 months MoT. Please call 07436002647
940

Royal Enfield Constellation

£4,000, 1958, one owner for 50 years, restored in the nineties, stored 20 years, starts and runs well, no oil leaks, needs small amount of work to return to concours, very rare, early example. Please call 01922419809
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1277

Suzuki GS1000S

1980, V reg, rare red livery, 39,000km, recently serviced, full history, oiro £6500. Please call 01785851664
924

Triumph 21

£3,750, 1966, blue and white, totally rebuilt, superb condition, first to see will buy. Please call 07810215436
1373

Triumph Bonneville

1966, £12,000, 1966, custom Bonneville, complete rebuild, interesting history, call for details. Please call 07767404980
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Triumph T110

1960, £7,000, 1960, excellent condition, owned since 2006, refurbished 2012, resprayed, stainless, rims, spokes, spindles, fixtures, engine overhauled, new cylinders, pistons, gearbox, overhauled, runs, Sorned. Please call 07982330867
1381

Triumph TR6

1966, £4,500, 1966, American import, V5, Sorn, new battery, older restoration, runs well, easy starter, stopped riding so it has to go. Please call 07488 358646
1115

Triumph TRW

£3,800, 1952, restored during Covid, loads spend, good runner. Please call 07794309138 1369

Triumph Thunderbird

£5,000, 1955, two owners from new, paint and chrome very good, s/s wheels mech sound. Please call 07794309138 1368

Triumph Tiger 70

£4,750, 1938, very tidy condition, runs well, s/s rims, good paint, tyres etc. Please call 07794309138 1370

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Triumph

Rigid 6T sprung hub, 1950, wants complete front end standard or chopper length, prefer nice condition, Brighton South coast area please. Also 6T 110 Steib 501 outfit. Please call 07396270365 932

Wanted

1980, £50. Wanted - rear mudguard, ideally chrome but painted or fibreglass would do. Please call 07736 146591. Cumbria 1288

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Triumph TR5 1955 ....£7,000

AJS 500cc 1956.............................£4,000

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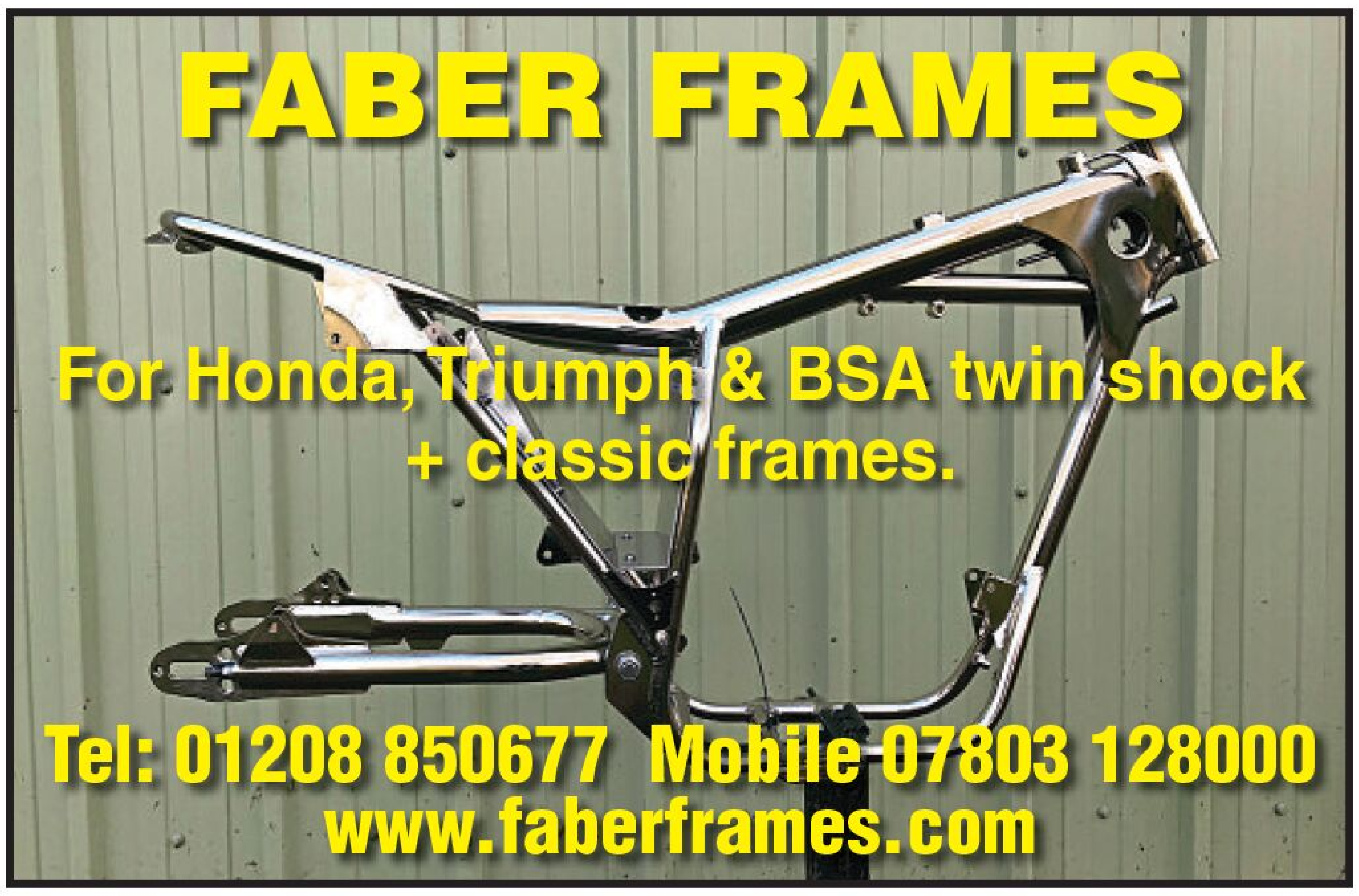

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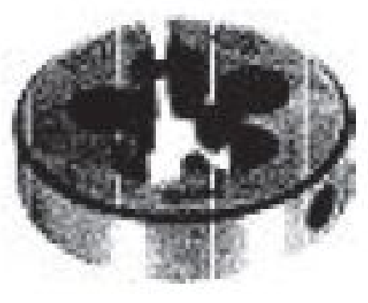

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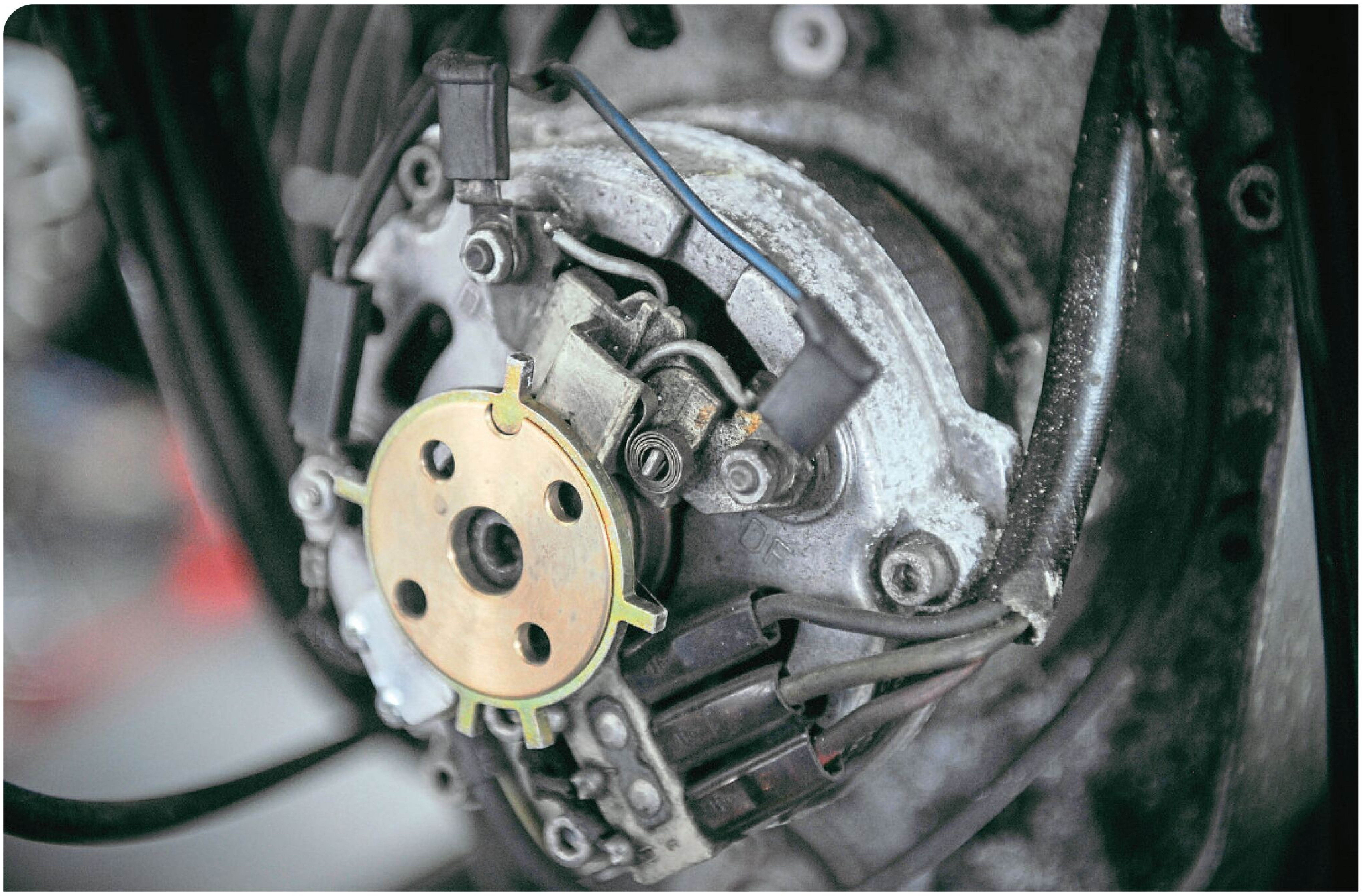

An alternator is wider because of the windings on the outside

Dynamo vs. alternator

Let's look at the two main methods of charging our batteries – dynamos and alternators

Words by Oli Hulme

AN ALTERNATOR AND A DYNAMO are both electrical generators. The largest difference is that an alternator produces alternating current (AC) hence the name, while a dynamo produces direct current (DC).

DC is what you need to charge your battery and thus give you the necessary electrical power to provide sparks, lights, and turn your starter motor, if your machine has one.

DYNAMOS

As a general rule, a dynamo consists of a shaft driven from the rotation of the crankshaft by chain or gears with a set of electrical windings around the outside, and these windings spin within a set of magnets fixed to the inside of the body. Dynamos were mainly used on motorcycles until the 1960s.

A motorcycle dynamo can be thought of as a simple DC motor running in reverse. Rather than applying a DC current to a motor and getting it to spin, the engine of the bike provides that spin, and you get out an electrical current. Some small Japanese motorcycles, such as Yamaha's earliest 200cc twins, used this motor/generator link to allow the use of a unit consisting of a starter motor that became a dynamo once the engine was running.

A dynamo consists of two main components: a magnet and a coil. In a dynamo, the coil is rotated within the magnetic field of the magnet, which induces a current to flow.

The windings of a dynamo are on the rotor inside

In a motor, current is supplied to the coil, which induces a magnetic field which is opposed by that from the magnet, causing the motor to rotate.

On a dynamo, it is the other way round: the mechanical power of the motorcycle

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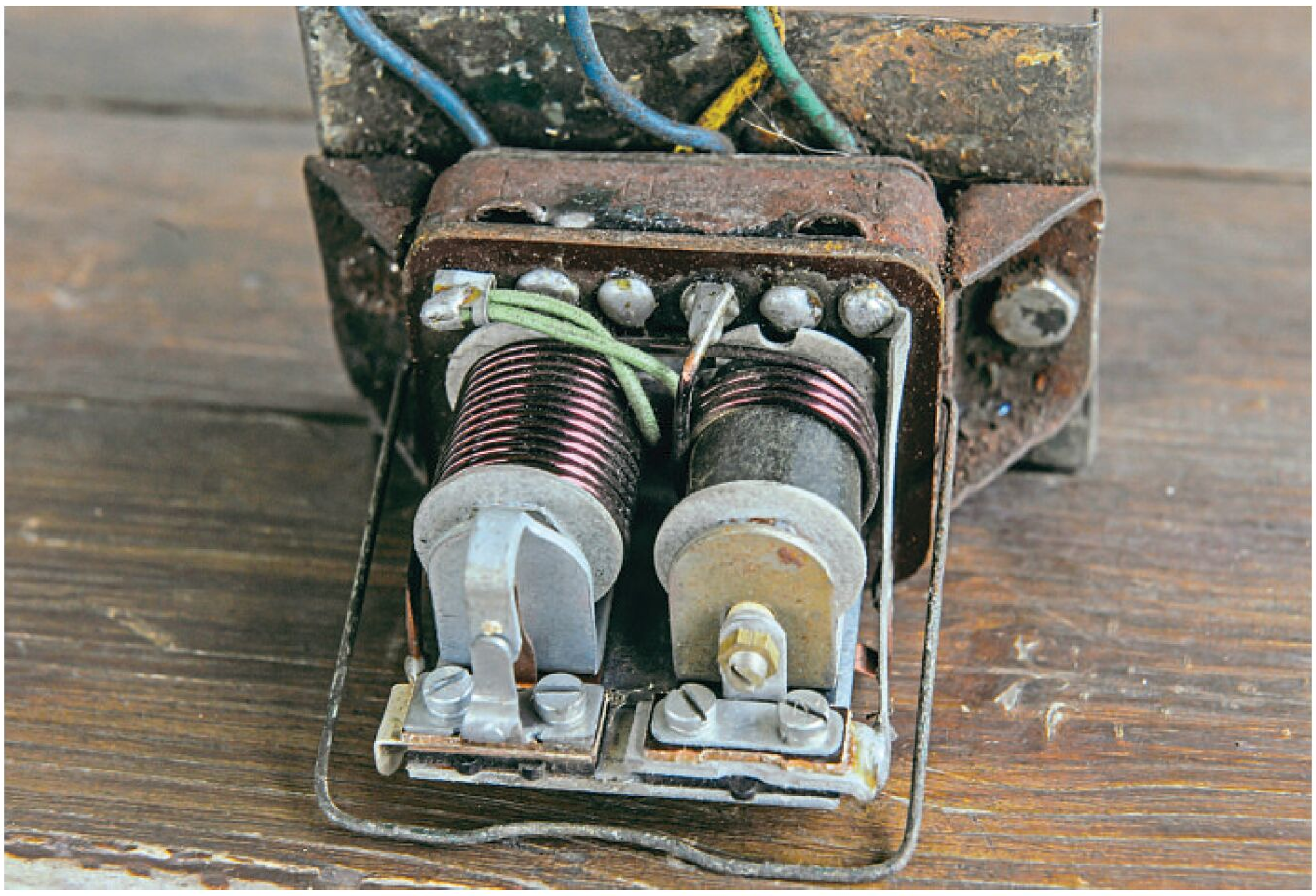
The dynamo magnet is on the inside of the casing



A voltage regulator for dynamo

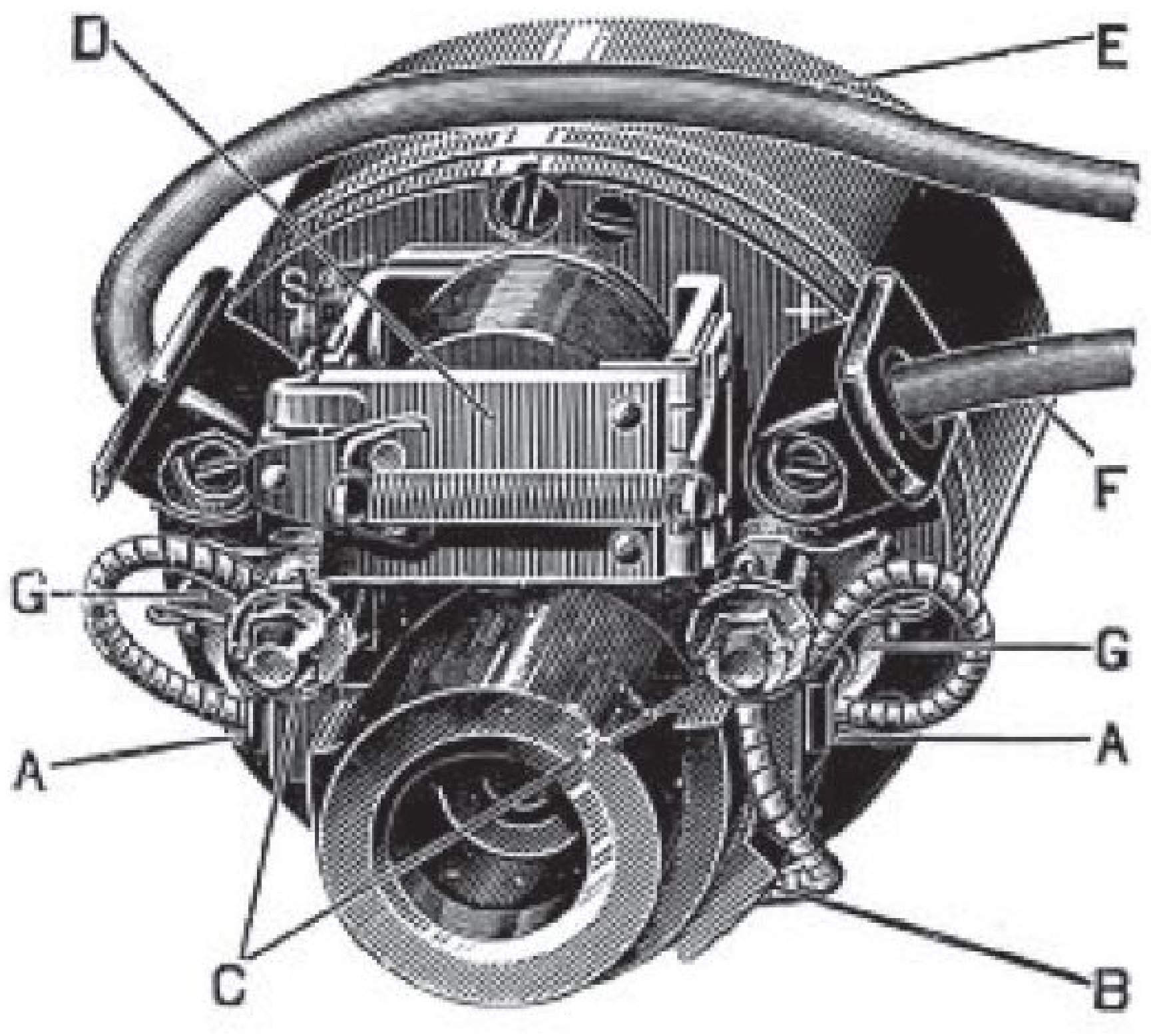


FIG. 1. DYNAMO TYPE E3.
A—Main brush.
B—Control brush.
C—Nuts securing brush eyelets.
D—Cutout.
E—Cable to head lamp switch terminal marked F.
F—Cable to head lamp switch terminal marked +.
G—Spring lever holding brushes in position.

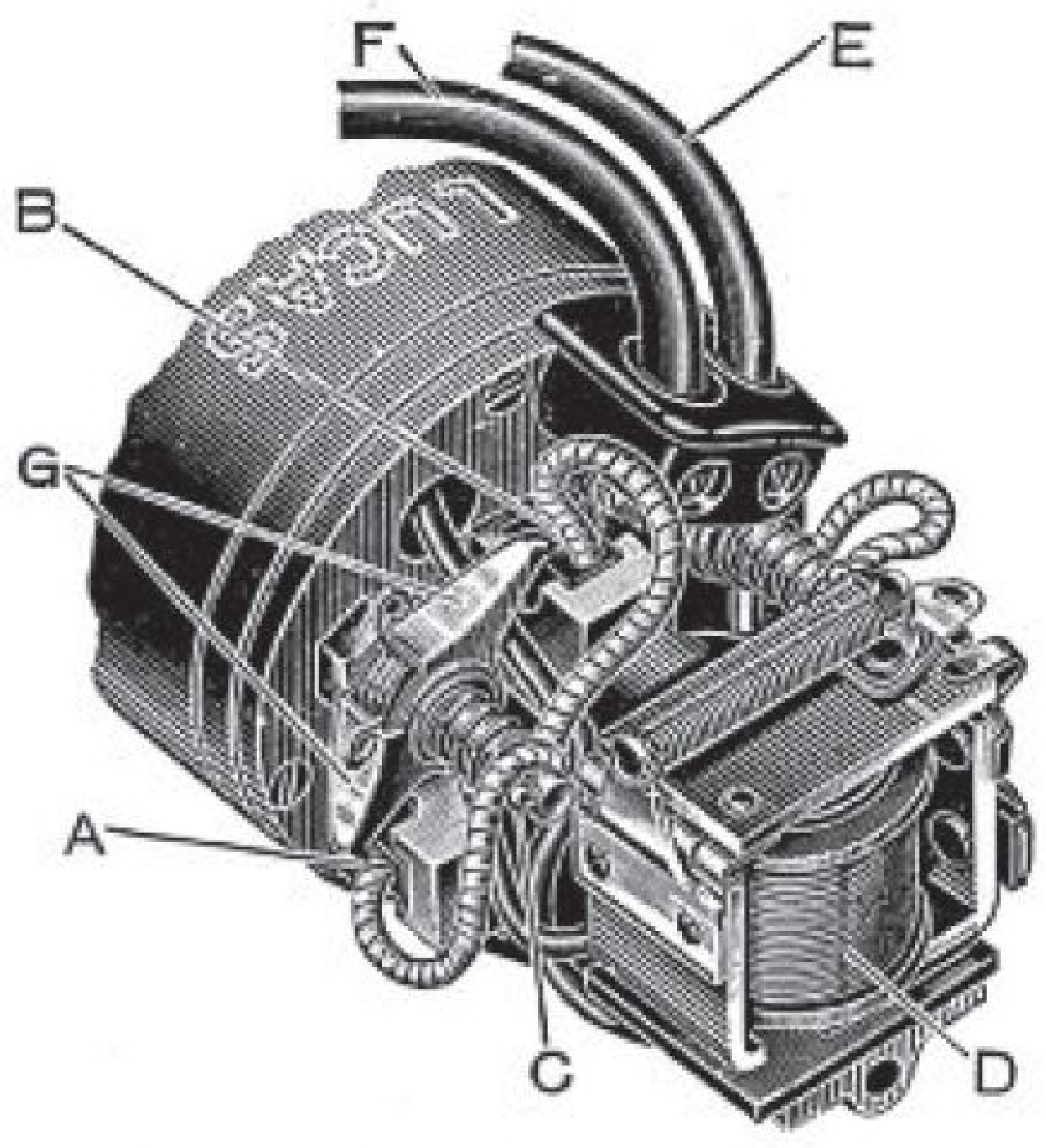


FIG. 2. DYNAMO TYPE E25.
A—Main brush.
B—Control brush.
C—Cotter pin securing brush eyelet.
D—Cutout.
E—Cable to head lamp switch terminal marked +.
F—Cable to head lamp switch terminal marked F.
G—Spring lever holding brushes in position.

engine spins the coil, and you get electricity out.

Where a traditional motorcycle dynamo differs from a DC motor is that there are two sources of magnetic field within the unit. The first is a soft-iron core which retains the magnetism when the engine is not running. However, this is not a particularly good magnet and the amount of magnetism it retains is relatively small and certainly not enough to generate the 45-60w required by a classic motorbike. But it is just about enough to get a small current flowing in the coil when the engine is first started.

FIELD COILS

This is where the field coil, a secondary coil within the dynamo, comes into play. Some of the output from the generator coil is fed back into the dynamo through the field coil, which then generates a secondary magnetic field of its own. This magnetic field is stronger than the residual field from the soft-iron core and therefore induces a bigger current to flow in the coil. More current is therefore supplied back to the field coil, giving an even greater field strength, more induced current in the coil, and so on until an equilibrium is reached for a given engine speed. The power produced is transferred through carbon-type brushes into the electrical system. This is unregulated electricity – the voltage goes up and down depending on how fast the engine is running, and that's why you have a regulator, which turns that unregulated electricity into the regulated amount of current needed to charge the battery and run everything else, without boiling the battery and blowing all your bulbs, or stopping your lights from fluctuating at different speeds.

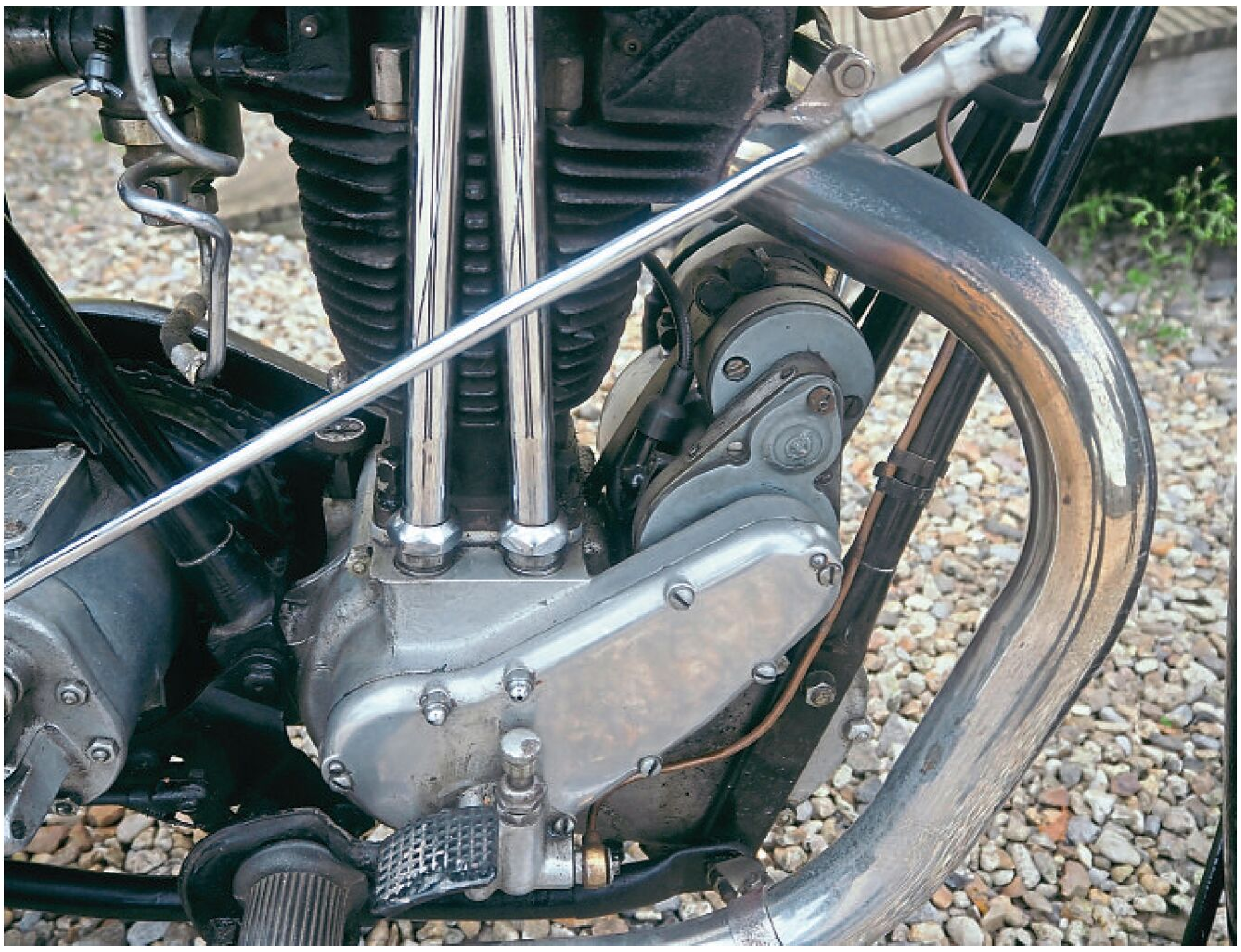
VOLTAGE REGULATOR

The voltage regulator makes the fluctuating voltages supplied by the dynamo into something more usable by the electrical system. It consists of two electrical switches which are opened and closed by a pair of solenoid coils. The regulator constantly compares the voltage of the battery, with the voltage being produced by the dynamo. When the dynamo is giving less volts than the battery, the regulator disconnects it from the system so it cannot draw any current. When the engine revs enough that the dynamo output voltage exceeds the battery voltage, the cut-out switch closes, allowing the dynamo to recharge the battery. Then, if the voltage coming from the dynamo gets too high, the second switch closes, diverting some of the output through a resistance and thereby reducing the magnetic field inside the dynamo, reducing the voltage output.

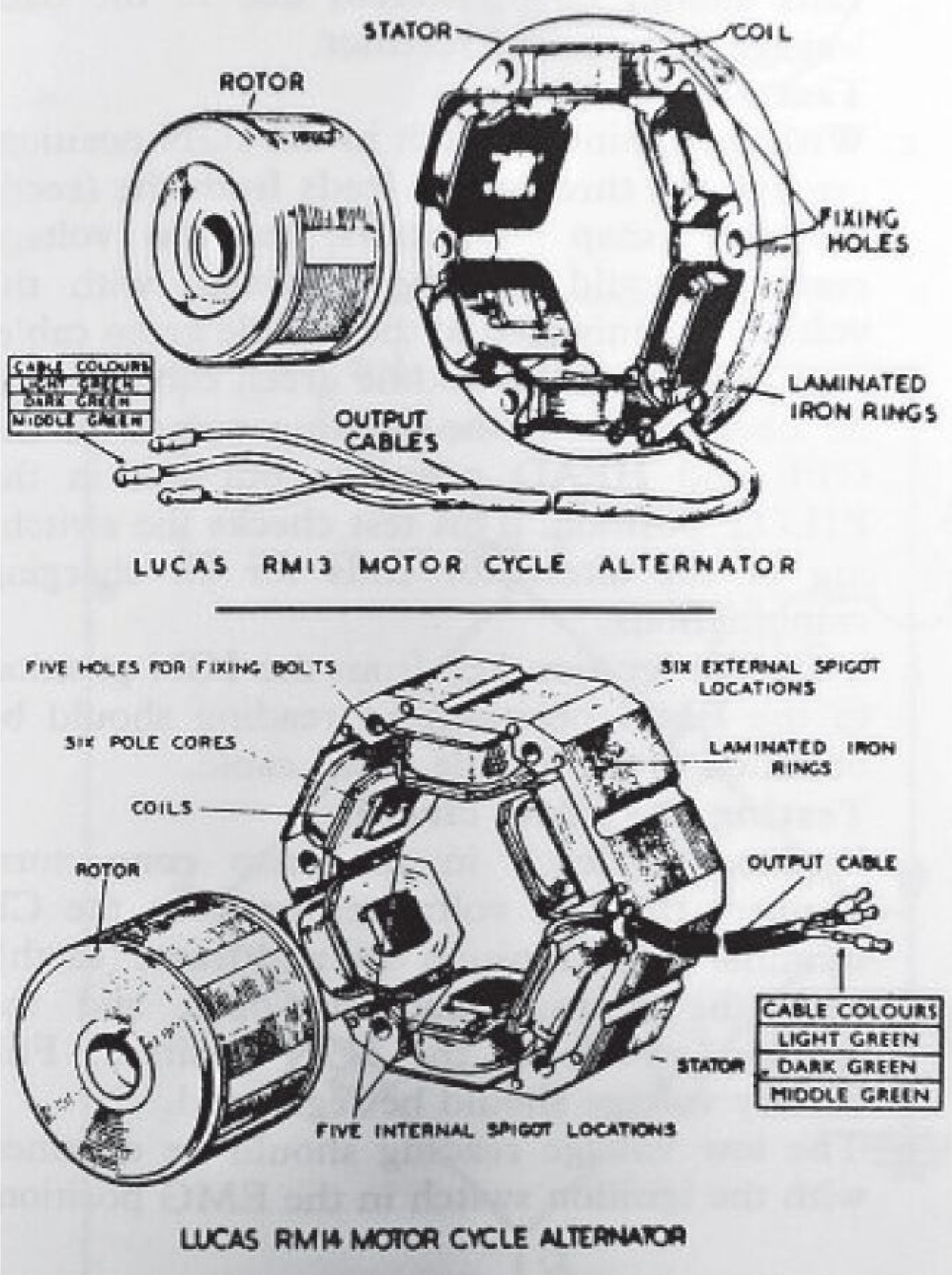
This Triumph has an alternator

MAGNETS

There are two sources of magnetic field within the dynamo unit. The first is



A mag-dyno, where the two are mounted on top of each other



Lucas RM13 and RM14 alternators.

A Zener diode, for converting excess voltage into heat

the magnetic soft-iron triumph t120 core, which is what retains the magnetism when the engine is not running. However, the amount of magnetism it retains is relatively small and not enough to generate the current required to keep a battery charged and the engine running. But it is just about enough to get a small current flowing in the generator coil when the engine is first started. There is also a field coil. Some of the output from the generator coil is fed back into the generator through the field coil and this generates a secondary magnetic field of its own. This magnetic field is stronger than that which comes from the core and it gets a bigger current to flow; this is sent back to the field coil, giving more current in the coil and so on until, at a high enough engine speed, enough electricity is produced to charge the battery.

ALTERNATORS

On a bike with an alternator, things work differently. An alternator uses slip rings, which are complete rings rather than the split rings of a dynamo, to connect to the external circuit.

On an alternator, there might be a single rotor, sometimes containing magnets, which may spin inside a stator, the name for a set of fixed windings mounted around the outside of the rotor, or a rotor that spins in a unit set around the outside a fixed stator. This rotor is commonly driven by the crankshaft.

There are two kinds of motorcycle alternator: one kind uses a rotor that is fitted with magnets and one does not. On a machine fitted with a permanent magnet alternator, the unit itself produces the initial electricity, meaning that kicking over and starting the bike with a flat battery is possible, as is the case with the classic Lucas RM type alternator used on most British bikes of the 1960s and 1970s. Some Japanese motorcycle alternators don't have permanent magnets and need juice from a charged battery to provide the sparks to start or a lengthy bump start to spin the engine long enough to get the electricity flowing. Alternators are three-phase.

AC/DC

How an alternator works is revealed in the name. The power it produces is AC (alternating current) rather than DC (direct current), and AC cannot be used to charge a battery. So, the current from the alternator needs to be converted to DC.

REGULATOR RECTIFIERS

As with the dynamo, the use of a regulator reduces the voltage to a usable level, and a device known as a rectifier is used to convert AC into direct current DC by using diodes to allow a current to flow through the device in one direction only. Diodes work like one-way valves within the rectifier to maintain this flow of direct current. This process is generally known as rectification.

Most modern machines have a combined regulator/rectifier and the surplus energy is regulated, usually by being turned into heat through the use of a heat sink in the casing. Some early Japanese bikes have separate regulator and rectifier units, and most British bikes with Lucas-type permanent magnet alternators bikes use a Zener diode, which on 1960s bikes were put into a rather groovy heat sink mounted below the headlight in a cooling air stream. The Zener diode component in the charging system acts as the voltage regulator to prevent overcharging the battery by 'shedding' or bypassing excess voltage as heat and works in tandem with a rectifier unit to maintain a stable DC voltage for the battery and protect the electrical components from voltage spikes. Got it?

WHICH IS BETTER?

On the whole, alternators are more reliable than dynamos. They produce more electricity more effectively, especially at lower speeds. However, they are harder to fault-find, given the complexity of their construction. CBG

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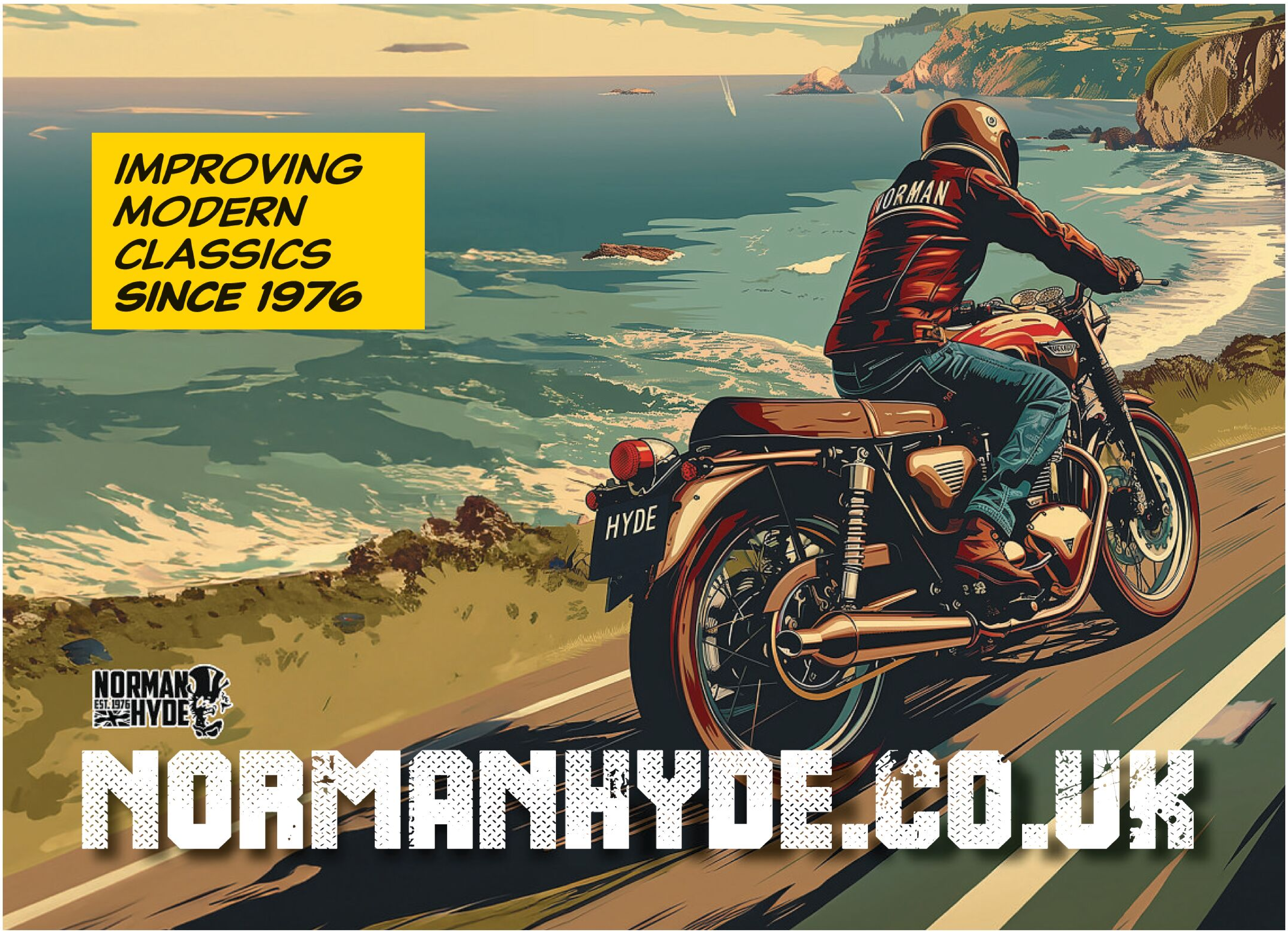

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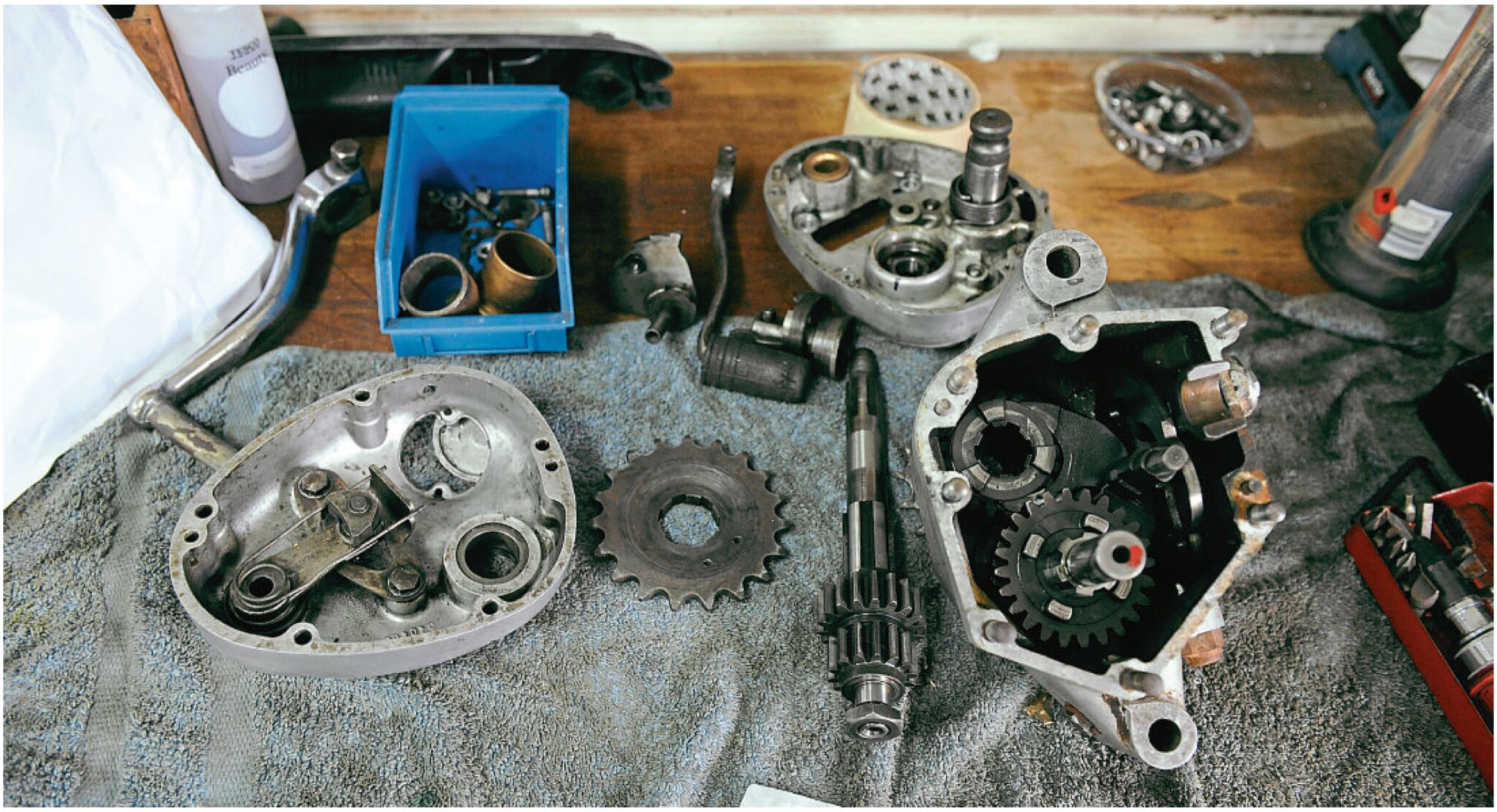


Rebuilding an AMC gearbox

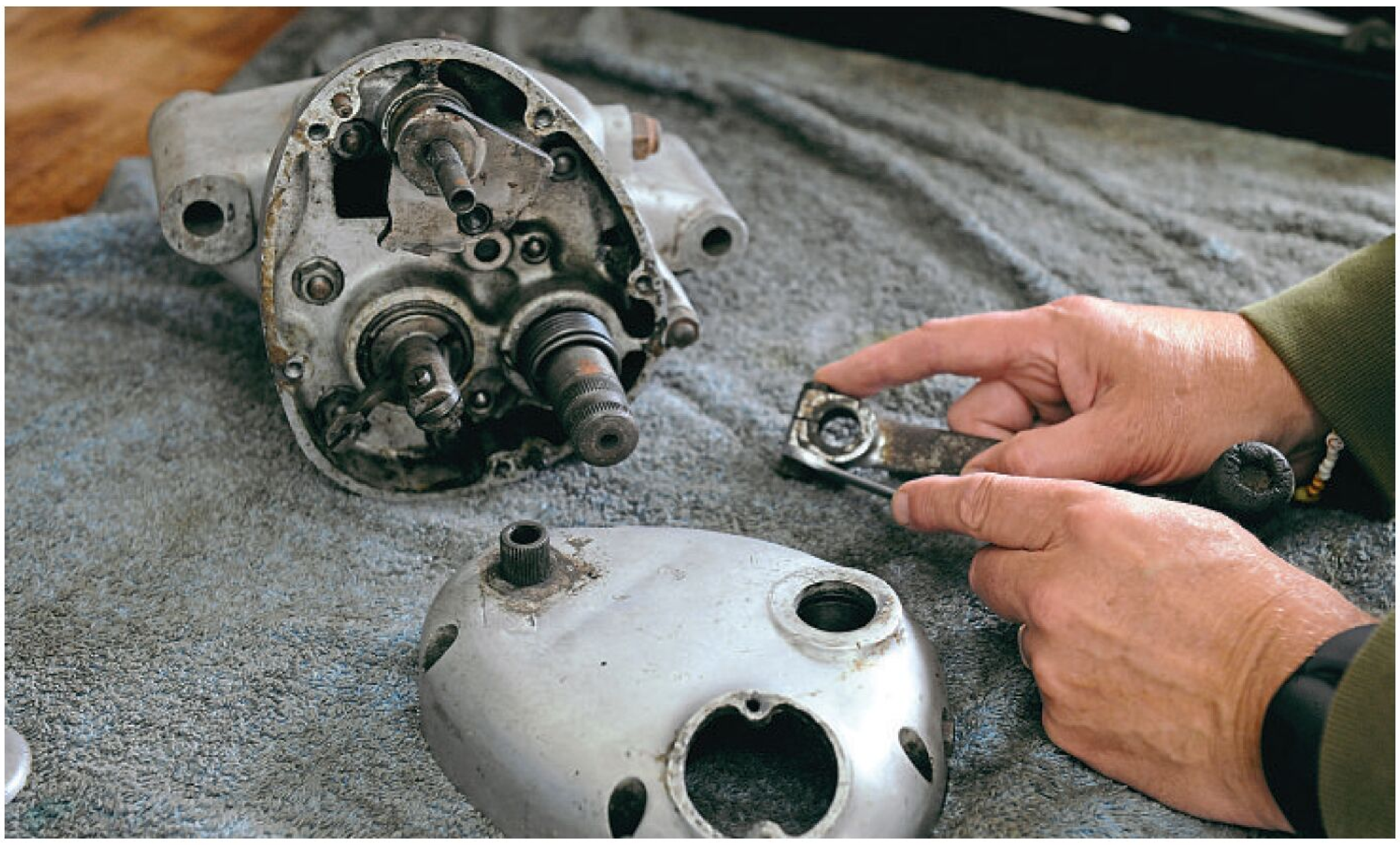
Used on many later Brit bikes, the AMC gearbox is widely used and possibly abused, so we decided to rebuild our Norton ES2 one in case...

Words, lack of knowledge and photography by Matt

I HAVE NEVER WORKED ON A GEARBOX before, but last month I was lucky enough to watch our friend Matt take apart the predecessor gearbox to this AMC model, the Norton 'Laydown.' Internally, they are very similar, and it didn't look too complicated – I think researching the BMW gearboxes with their precise shimming had put the whatsits up me!

So, as Project Eezee Two had a gearbox within the boxes it came in, which I knew nothing about, and building the bike, only to find the gearbox has an issue, or the thought of a rear wheel locking up isn't appealing, this new-found enthusiasm saw me looking into the box o'cogs.

The history of this most popular gearbox is scarce, but it is believed that most earlier gearboxes for AMC and



Nortons were made by Burmans, to AMC or Norton designs. But Burmans then announced it would stop making 'boxes, so AMC had to invest in new machinery at its Woolwich factory to make its own – and sell Norton what it needed. From what I found out, there were heat treating facilities already, but the gear-cutting machines were specialised and expensive. AMC started making its own gearboxes by 1956 but didn't initially keep up with demand, so some Nortons had to be fitted with the old-style boxes!

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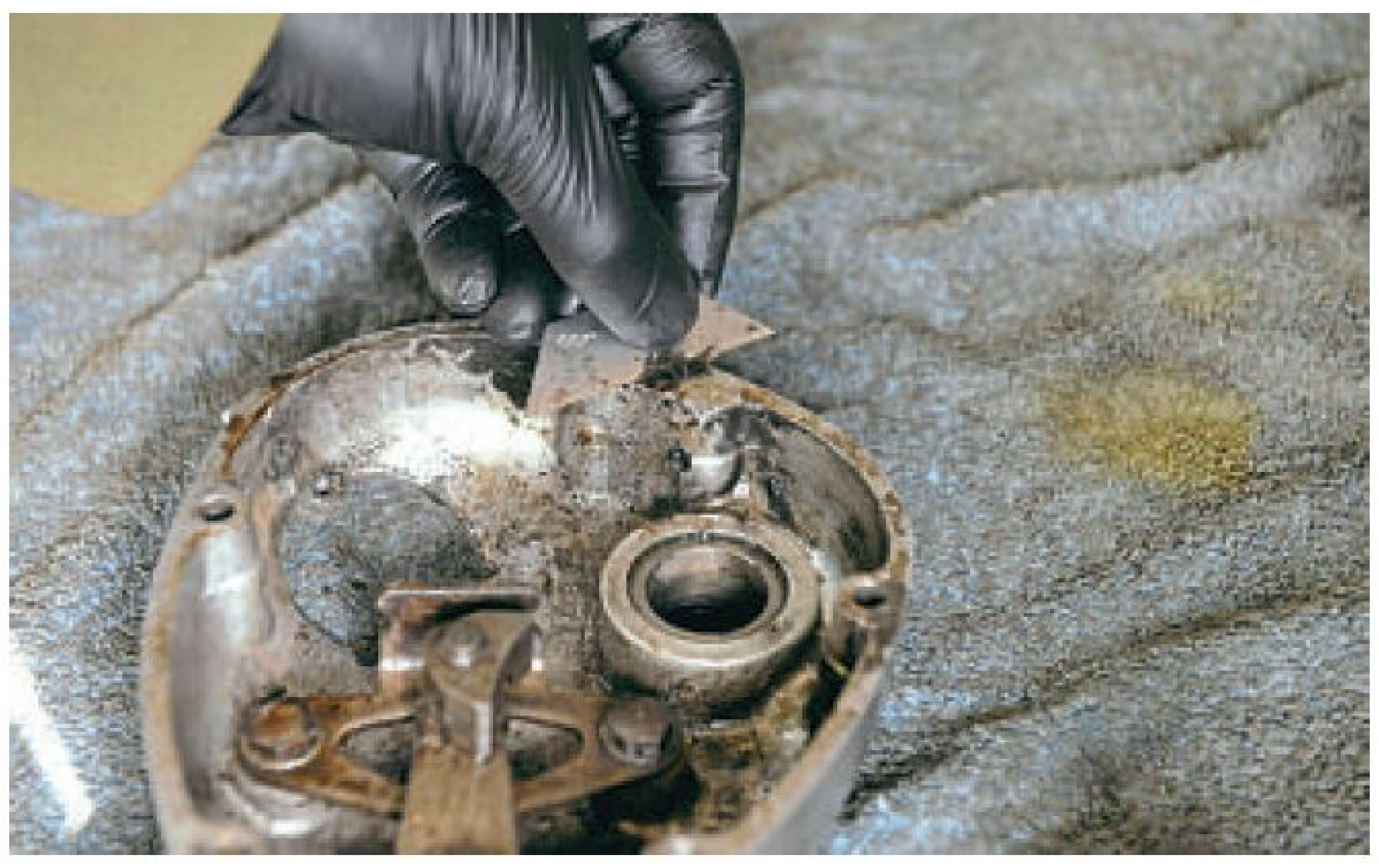

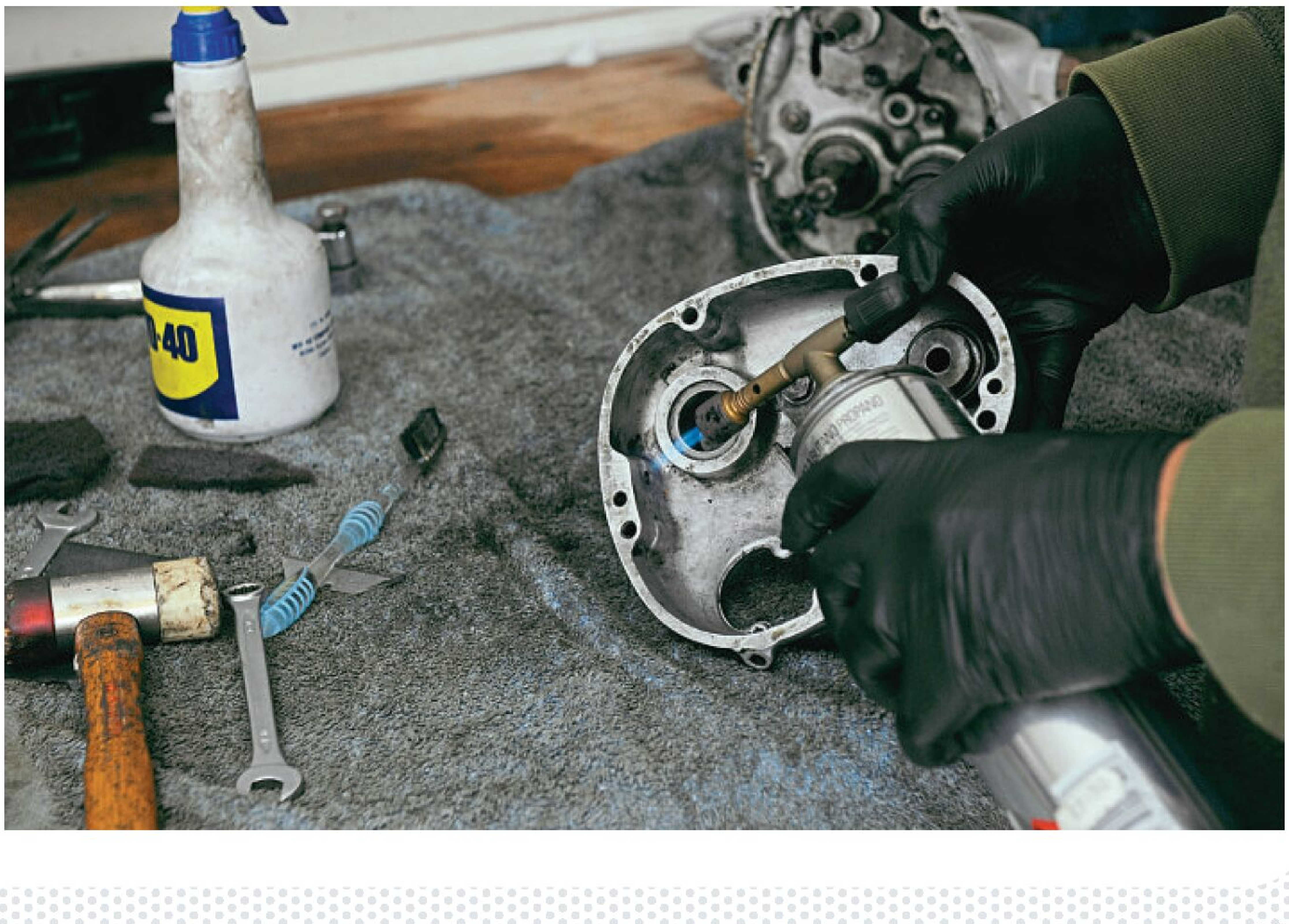

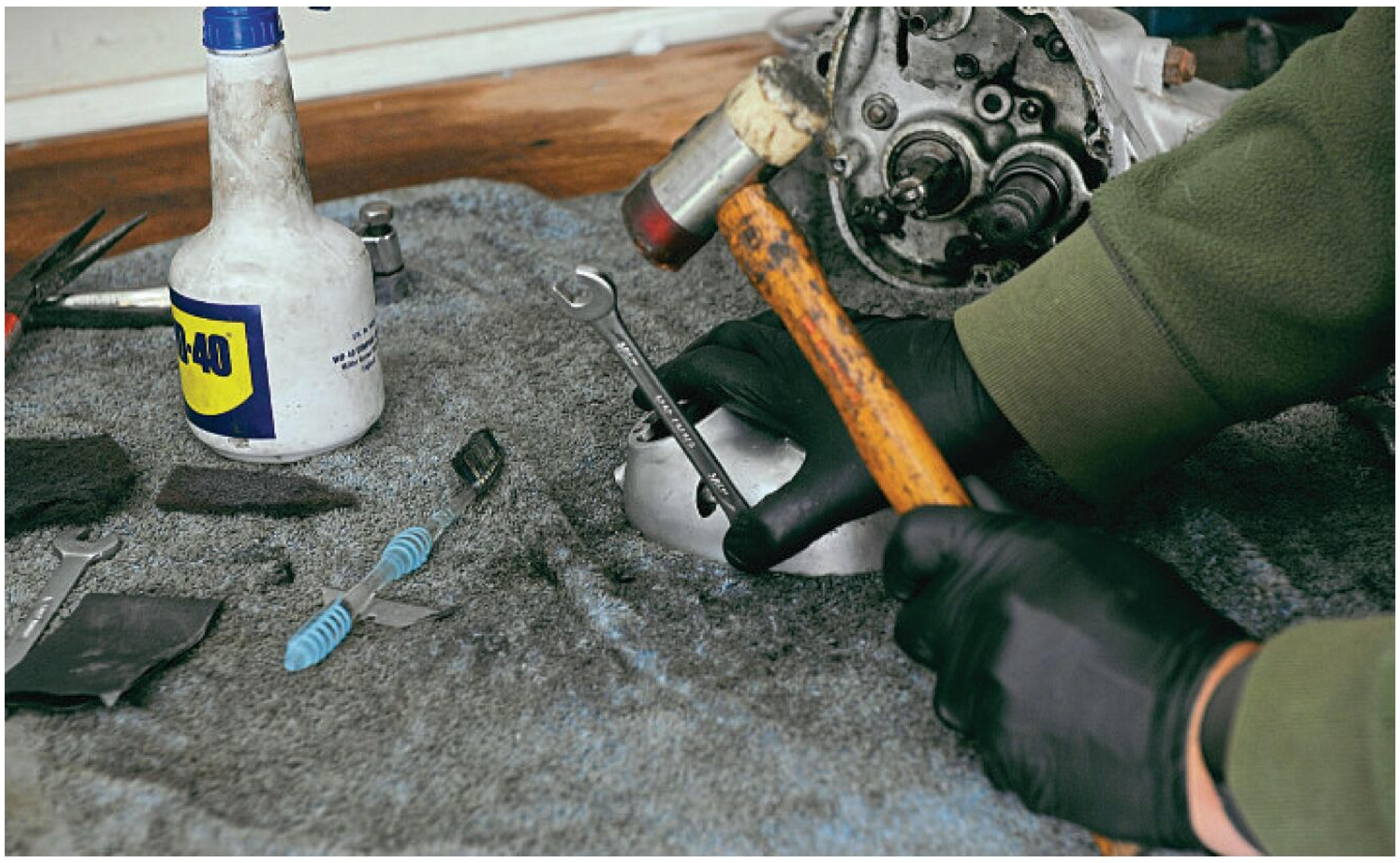

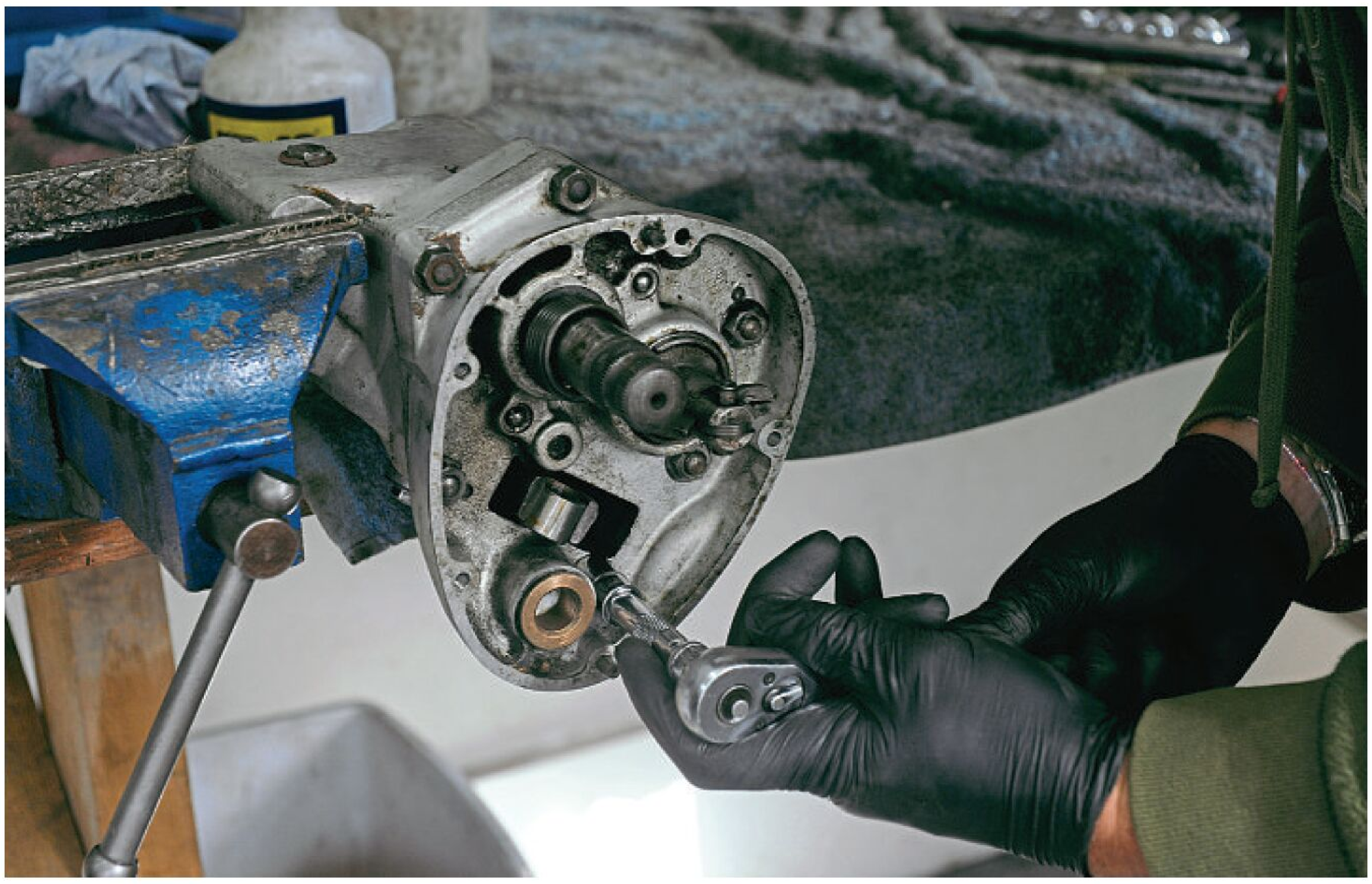

The AMC gearbox continued until the end of Commando production in 1977. In that time, few changes had happened: some AJS and Matchless models had an improvement to the kick-start spring, with Norton following suit a year and a bit later. Norton 'boxes have a serial number beginning with N or NA, with M and MA for Matchless, and AJS (the A denoting the better kick-start mod). Ours is N10692, so possibly from a bike a year or so later, but nonetheless, the correct sort.

There are many irritatingly small differences in the 'boxes depending on what bikes they were meant for originally, like gears, sprockets, and shaft lengths, so be careful when ordering shafts or gears especially. Bearings also changed over time, but for the better. Though you need to know the origins of your 'box, a benefit is that all parts are available, and even five-speed kits can be fitted, or magnesium casings, or close-ratio clusters – the sky is the limit.

But for a standard ES2, all we want is a gearbox that works as nicely as we can make it for a standard 500cc, single-cylinder road bike. And not to ➡

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Golden rules of gearbox rebuilding

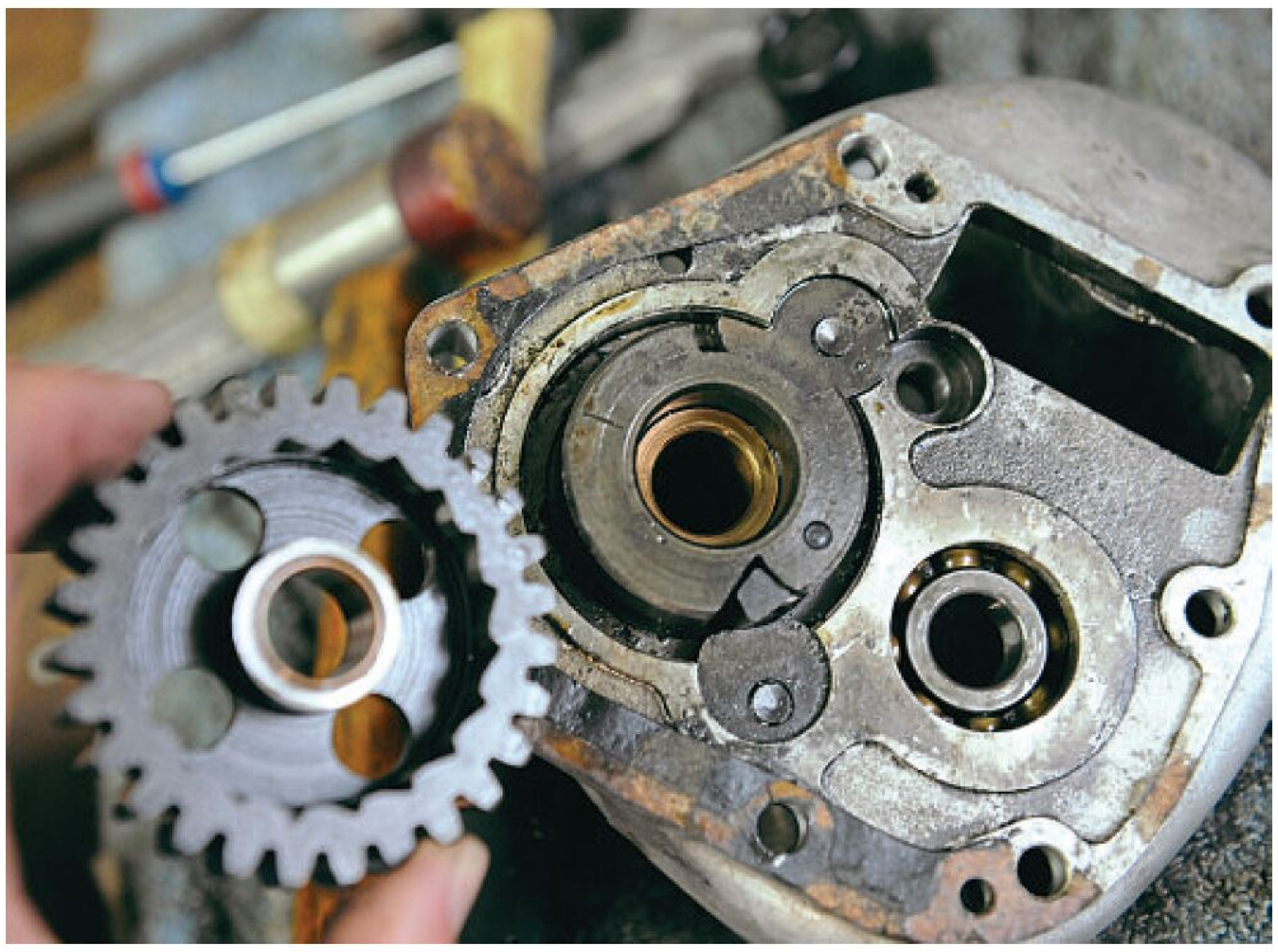
Here's a little advice from Nova Racing, gearbox specialist. For more, see novaracing.co.uk

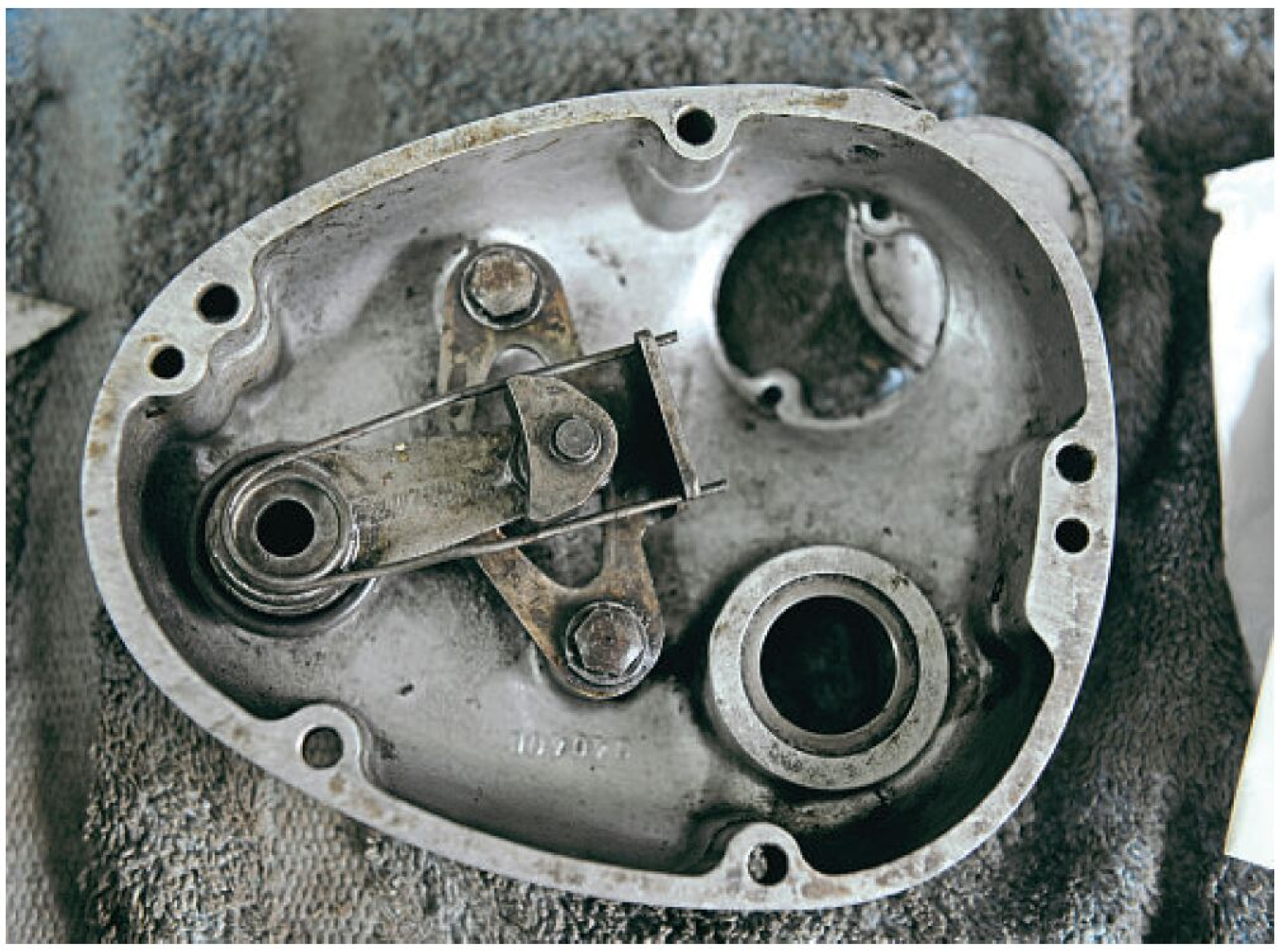
- Always replace any circlips with new ones when rebuilding the gearbox. These are available from your local dealerships for your relevant make of bike. Paying as little at £8 for six circlips can save you a bill for a whole gearbox.
- Always check gear dogs and teeth at every rebuild. If something looks worn, chipped, dented, cracked, or heavily discoloured, replace it. If unsure, seek an expert's opinion.
- If possible, check the gearbox shifts cleanly up and down the 'box before sealing up the engine cases. If this is not possible, at least check with the cases dummy built together before the engine goes back into the frame.
- Always check for excessive wear on selector forks and selector drums and also check selector fork pins.
- Make sure that the main gearbox bearings are not worn out. This is usually characterised by feeling 'lumpy' or excessive lateral play while turning by hand.
- Check there is not excessive 'play' in the selector mechanism, especially on older bikes, which can have a lot of linkages and rollers. If there is large amount of lateral movement at the pivot points or rollers allowed to move around rather than just rotating, gear shifting can become erratic and the result can be a damaged gearbox.
- Always make sure that sliding gears move smoothly along the shaft and engage correctly with the gears either side. If possible, ensure that the cross-drilled oil holes in the shaft line up with any holes in the selector fork groove of the gear.
- Make sure that all fixed gears rotate freely but without excessive side play. If the gear runs on a splined or plain bush, make sure these are within tolerance and aren't discoloured. This can show signs of overheating due to an incorrect clearance. If a gear has a bronze bush which is heavily worn get it replaced. We will manufacture and fit new bronze bushes if you send us the gear.
- Always check plain washers and splined washers aren't dished – this can be caused by overheating or just after many years of use. A dished washer will take up clearance which will lead to seized gears. Again, a few pounds for some new washers can save a much bigger bill.

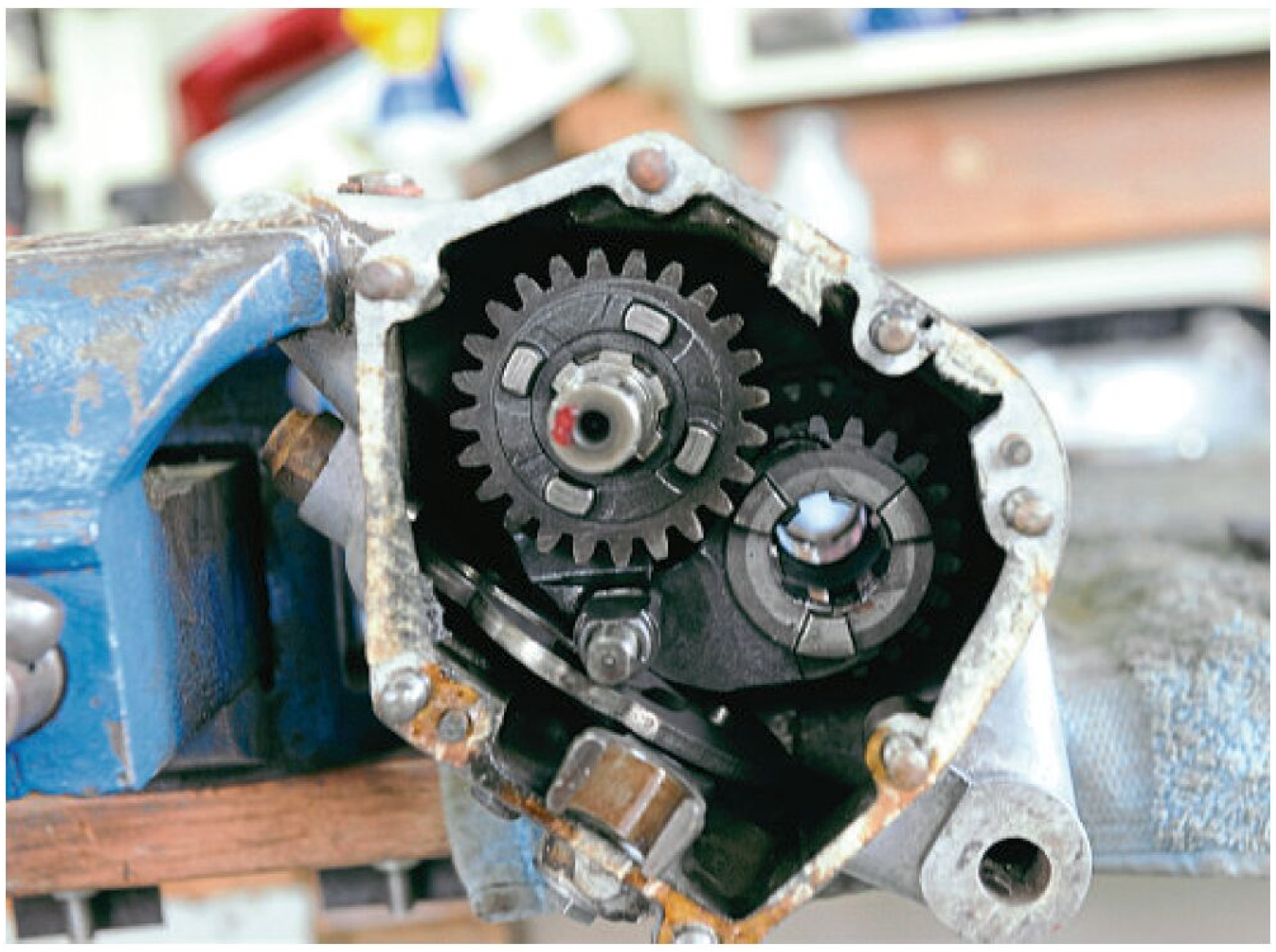
spend a fortune, as that's already been spent! The only mod may be to adjust the output sprocket to help tailor the gearing to modern-day speeds and the engine's power delivery.

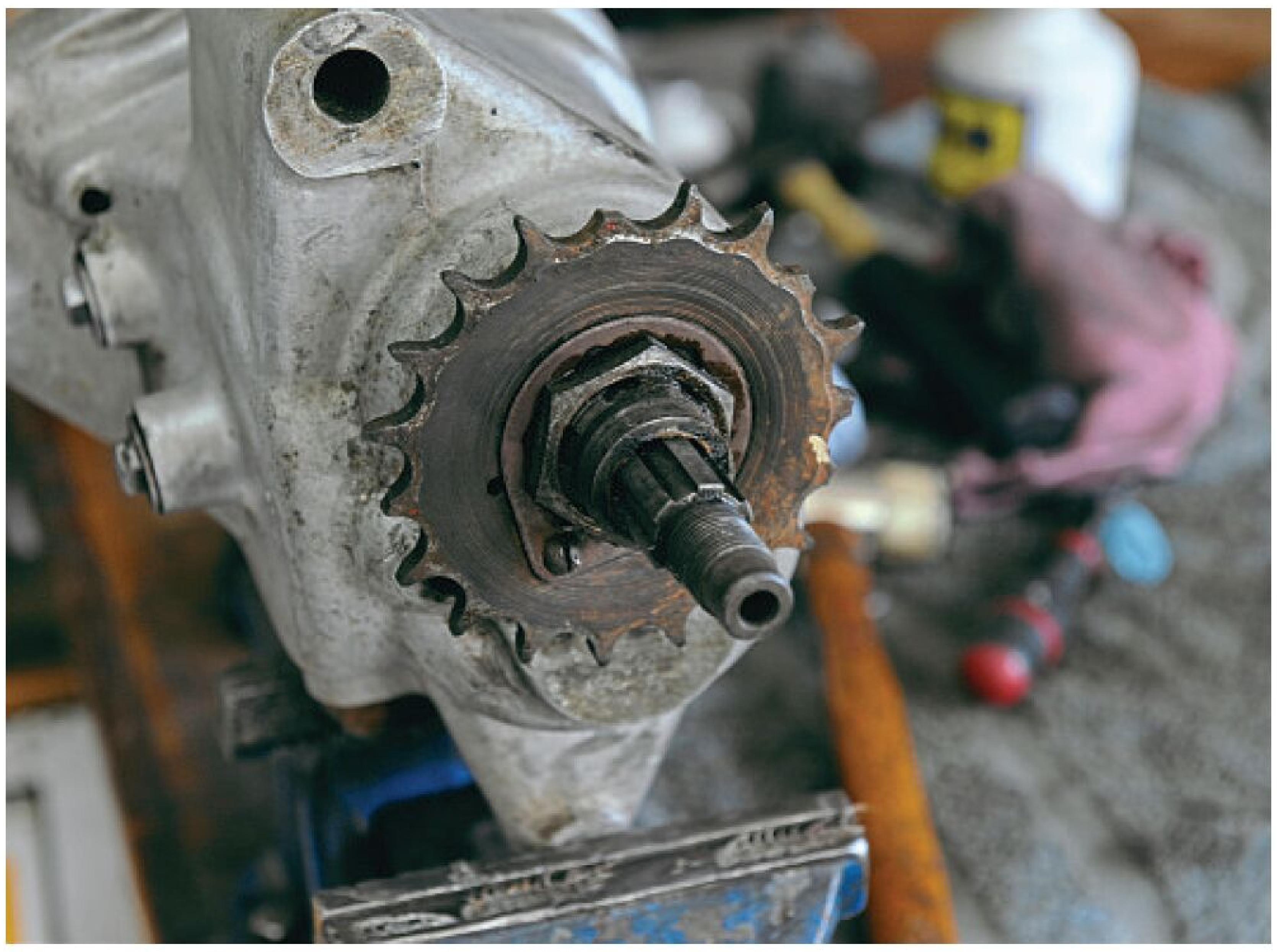
Our gearbox was in the bottom of a box; if yours is in the bike, you can remove those with a pre-Featherbed frame, but Featherbed frames have to come out as a unit with the engine.

You'll need Cycle thread and Whitworth spanners, sockets, taps and dies, and ours had a few Allen heads in too, as well as the odd crosshead screw. A rubber or soft-head mallet, a length of chain, plumber's







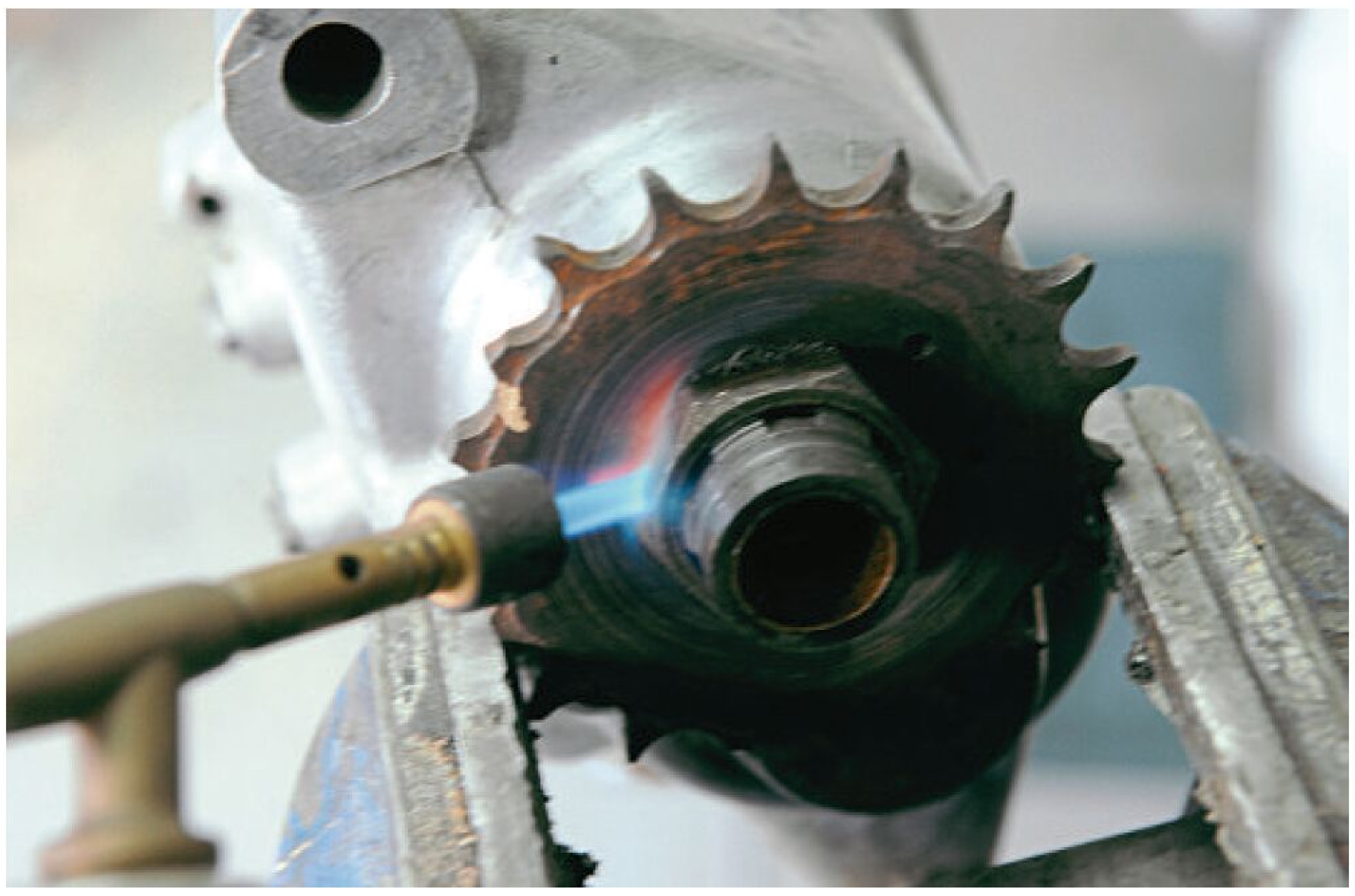


blowtorch and other usual gear is needed.

Taking the case off, everything looks much better than the 'box Matt had been working on. It is dry inside and everything feels free. There are two kick-starts, but only one has the correct fitting for the output shaft. With the outer casing off, you can see remnants of sealer, which is not uncommon, but there is also some possible damage – maybe a spill? Checking inside shows no damage or cracks, so this will just get polished out.

I don't think a highly polished finish would suit an otherwise standard bike, so I'm using a Scotch-Brite (400-grit) pad to clean up the surface with WD40 and a Stanley knife blade to get stubborn muck and old gasket off – we don't want a leaky Norton. With some gentle hand polishing afterwards, this should look new without looking like a tart's handbag.

Fill level plug was irritatingly stiff, so heated the cover up around it to save ➡



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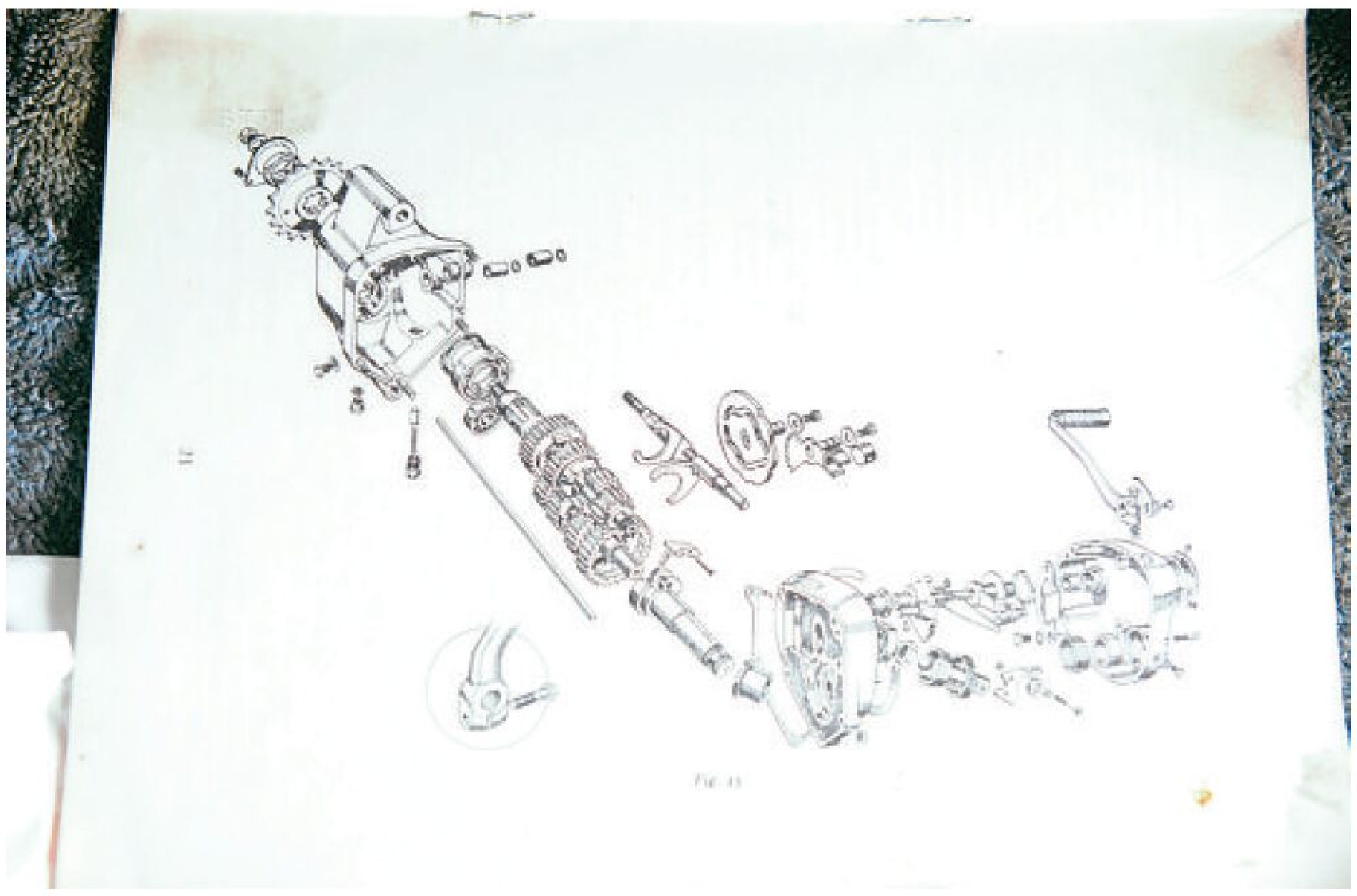

> **“So, with some heat, the huge 38mm (yes, metric, but fitted well enough) sprocket eventually came off, remembering it’s a left-hand thread! Feels so weird to be putting that much force clockwise to be undoing something.”**

rounding anything off. Then popped the casing into the vice to remove this rather sorry-looking sprocket and output shaft. Broken teeth could have been from laying around but tired, shark’s fin-like teeth are a sure sign of neglect. These were often everyday bikes or even working machines.

The gearchange ratchet looks all right, with nice, sharp teeth and smooth, unworn shaft. The outer bearing looks and sounds quiet, and the brass bush that the ratchet is held seems unworn also. Then it’s off with the inner casing, six ¼ Whitworth nuts coming off nicely, and a soft mallet does the trick.

I’m a fool – I’ve not taken the clutch operating lever out, so the lower shaft comes out with the kick-start mechanism. Still, it all looks good, with no damaged teeth, a good shaft, and I can take the clutch operator out in the vice. Make sure you mark on the casing where the lever comes out or you’ll never get the right angle for the cable pull. I use heat and then a punch to loosen the threaded collar, and will no doubt get berated for such heresy…

Once out, the kick-start tooth that flies out on a spring can be seen. It’s a little gunked up, so I can solve that easily with cleaning and oil. The teeth all look good and the rest looks nice, with no cracks. Think how you’d feel after 60 years of people kicking you!

I had a good look with a good torch and a magnifying glass to see for damage, the idea being I don’t want to disturb too much and get it wrong. But I felt if I’d gone this far, I may as well check everything properly. So, with some heat, the huge 38mm (yes, metric, but fitted well enough) sprocket eventually came off, remembering it’s a left-hand thread! Feels so weird to be putting that much force clockwise to be undoing something. But then everything could come out.

The casing needs a thorough cleaning, the gear camplate looks fine, so I’ve bought the gaskets, the O rings, three new bearings, and I found a brand-new output sprocket in the many boxes the bike came in. Though I have recently noticed from the various websites I’ve been looking at that the sprockets can come in various offsets – I guess depending on which engine the ‘box was mated to. The sprocket on was offset from the casing, but that doesn’t mean it was fitted to a single. I may have to wait until all is together and use a straight edge.

And it really pays to have an original workshop maintenance manual for the exploded diagram alone – but I also used an old *Motorcycle Mechanics* feature I found on the Jampot.dk website under the ‘technical/ transmission’ section. For those used to modern vehicles though, there are no torque settings, especially for the big ones like the sprocket, so I guess B****y tight with some threadlock will have to do.

Next month, after I’ve cleaned everything, it’s fitting the new bearings, double-checking all the parts for cracks and damage, using a die to clean up the threads, and then popping it all back together. I’m looking forward to it! **CBG**

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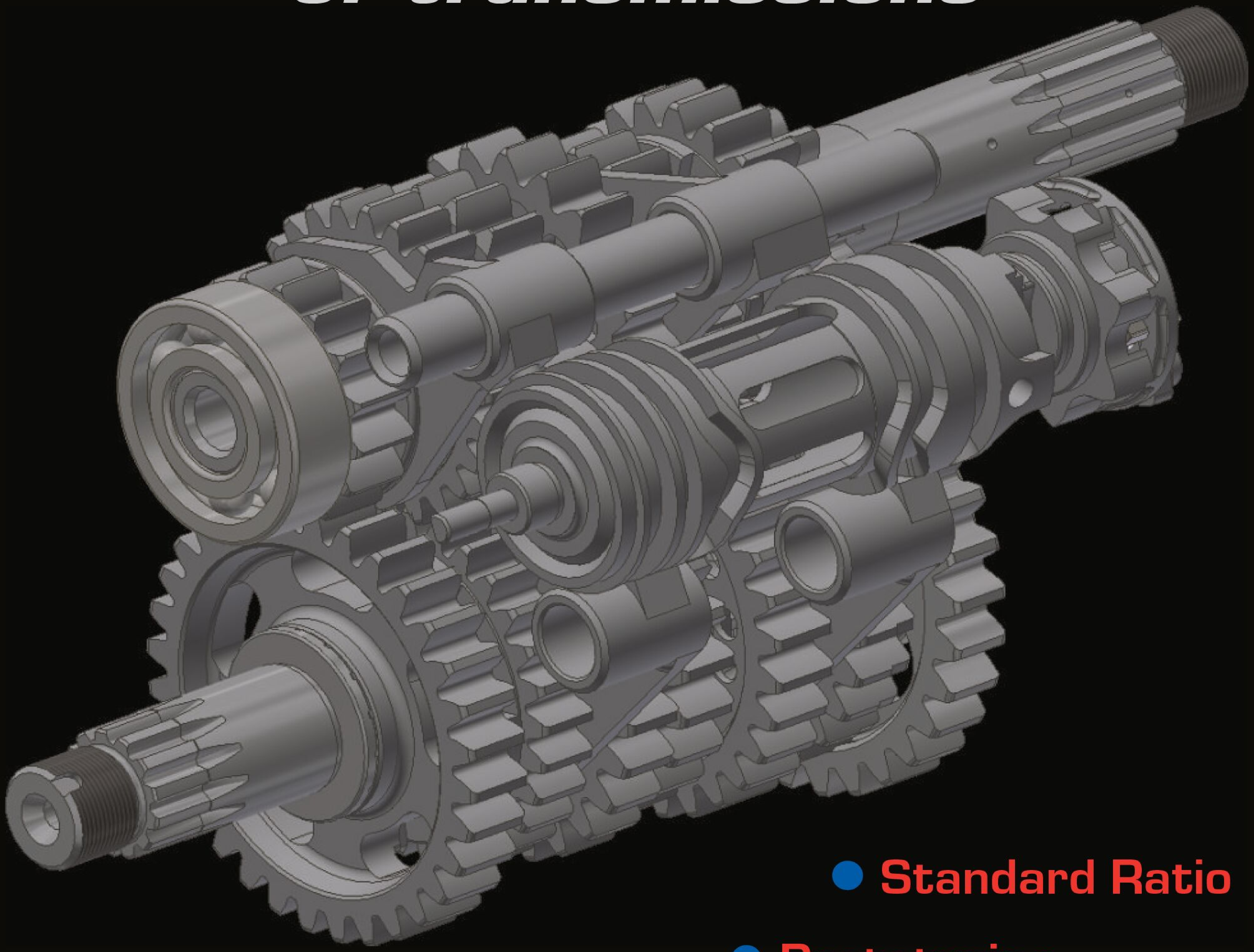

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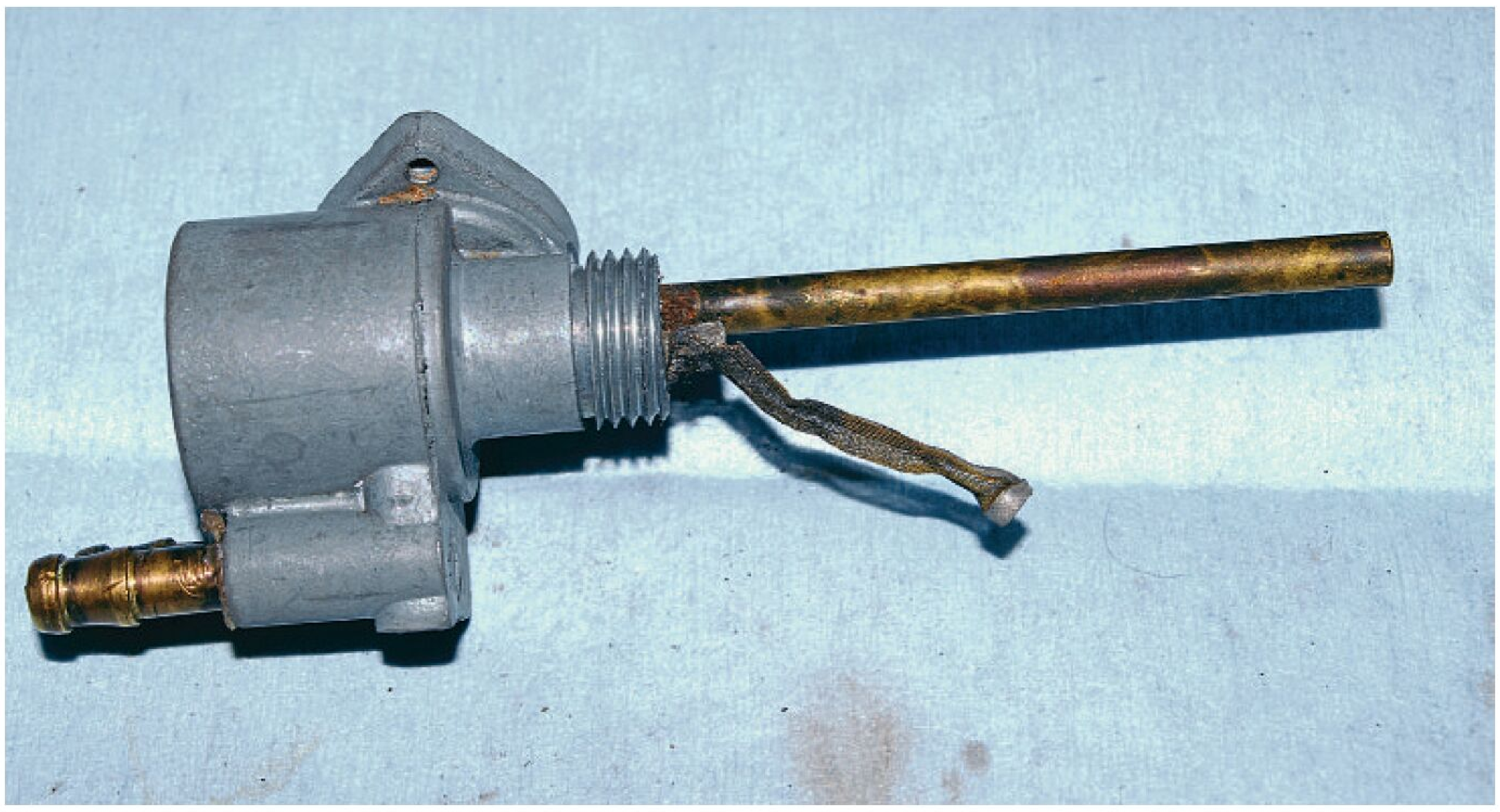
Don't buy a new fuel tap - fix it!

As parts get harder to find or cheap replacements don't live up to the job, get fixing...

Words, pics, and stinky petrol hands by Steve Cooper

MOST, IF NOT ALL, PETROL tanks feature an internal fuel filter of one kind or another. They are essential, especially as we fill our tanks via a large hole in the top – that anything can fall in. And then there's the dreaded rust, or dying tank sealer, or dirty fuel. Nowadays, fuel injection systems have a large filter before the pump, whereas our older bikes were more commonly fitted with a gauze filter on the intake of the tap.

Opinion seems to be divided as to their efficiency and some are, admittedly, neither use nor ornament, given time. However, most will – at the very least – prevent any large lumps of crud making their way to the carburettor(s). And given that quite a few tanks seem to

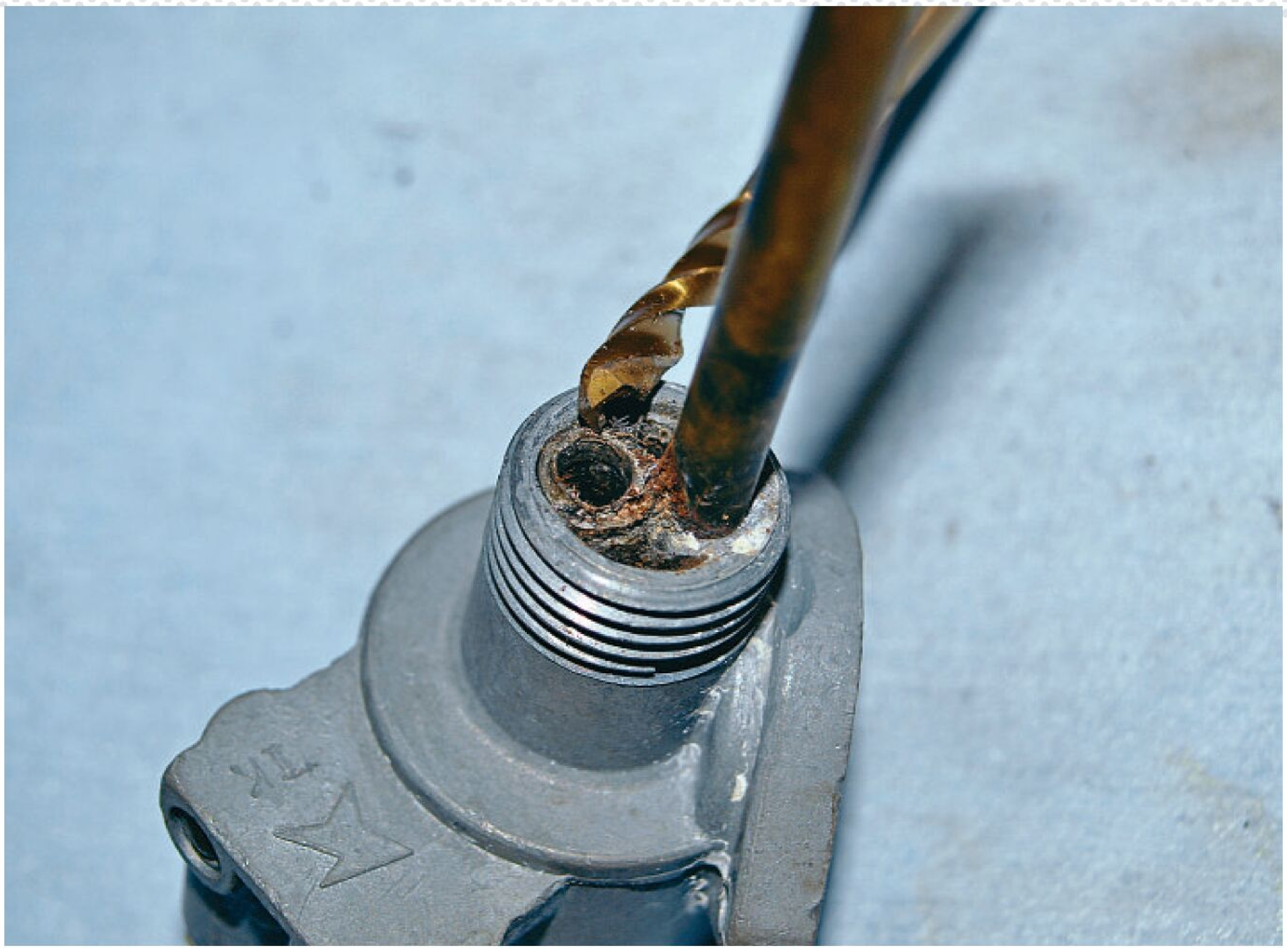


A perfect case in point: the main supply tube is fine but the reserve filter has been crushed and it's also become detached from its mount. This is doing nothing.

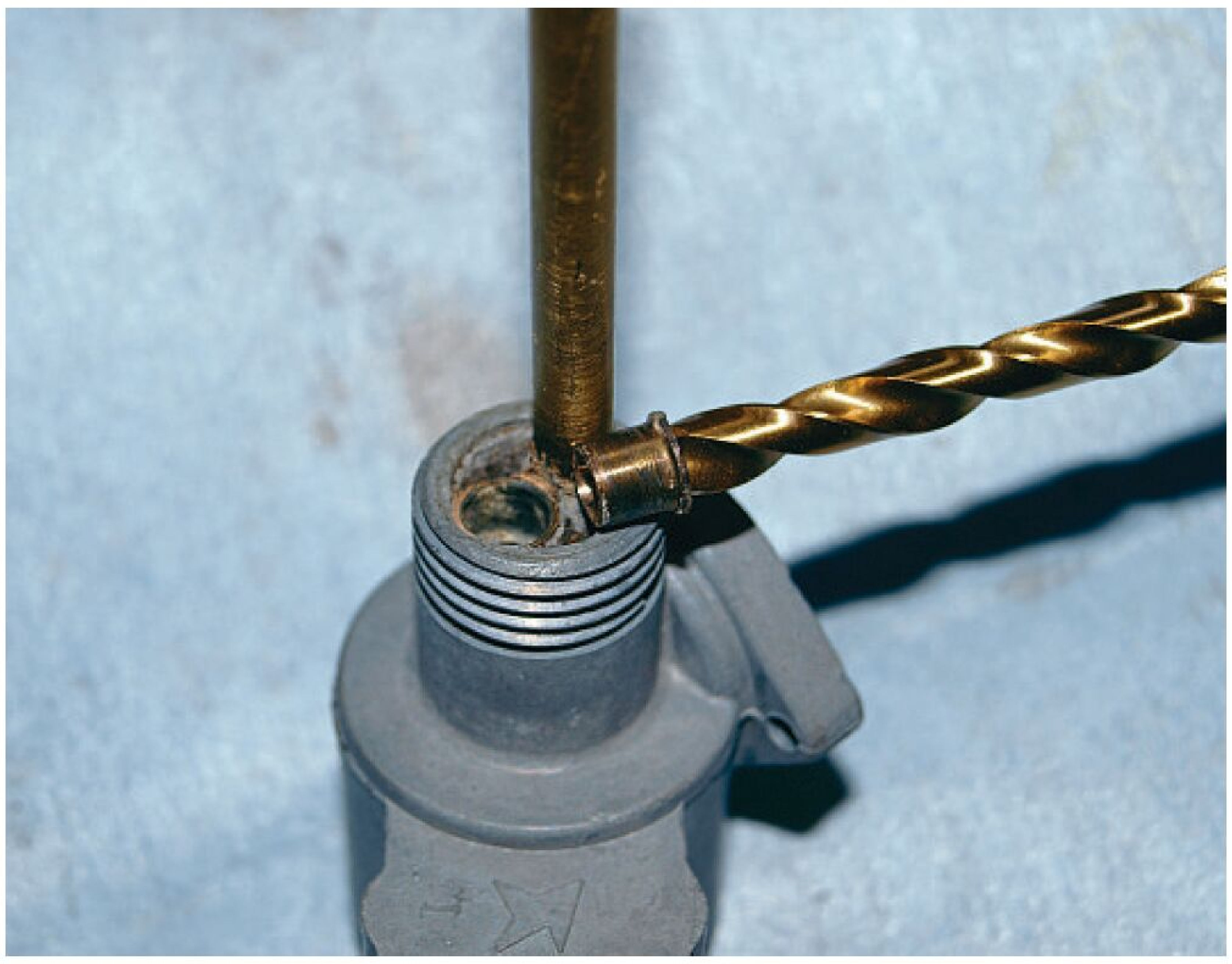
be throwing up issues with ineffective or poorly installed tank liners or rust, a decent tap filter will hold back a lot of flaky rubbish.

I'm working on an earlier Yamaha twin tap here and it's typical of what the 'Big Four' fitted for decades. It's also similar to BMWs and other European bikes. There's a tall brass pipe that supplies fuel when the tap lever is in the ON position and a mesh filter for the RESERVE setting. In practice, gunk tends to collect at the bottom, so the filter only comes into play when you turn the tap to reserve as you start to use the last litre or so of petrol. This is where you fervently hope and pray you won't end up with muck in the tiny passages and jets of the fuelling system. However, rather than expecting your chosen deity to intervene on your behalf in the vagaries of motorcycle carburation, wouldn't it make sense take some penetrative action beforehand? It's a relatively easy fix and can hopefully prevent that embarrassing stop at the side of the road shame...

➡

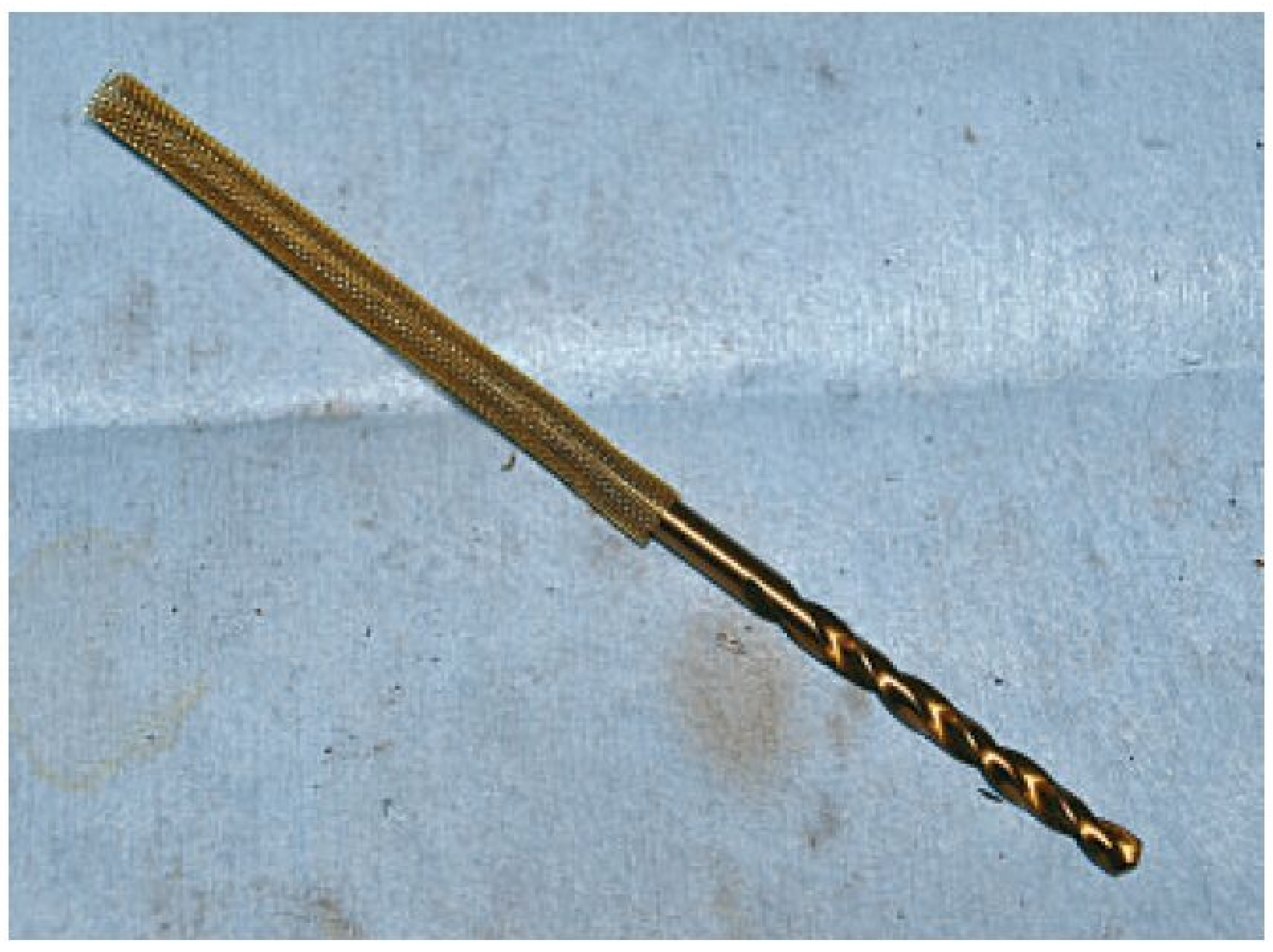


With the brass mesh removed, its mount also needs to be removed. Thankfully, we are working on metric parts, so one of my twist drills from a Screwfix bumper pack in 0.5 mm increments is the perfect fit.

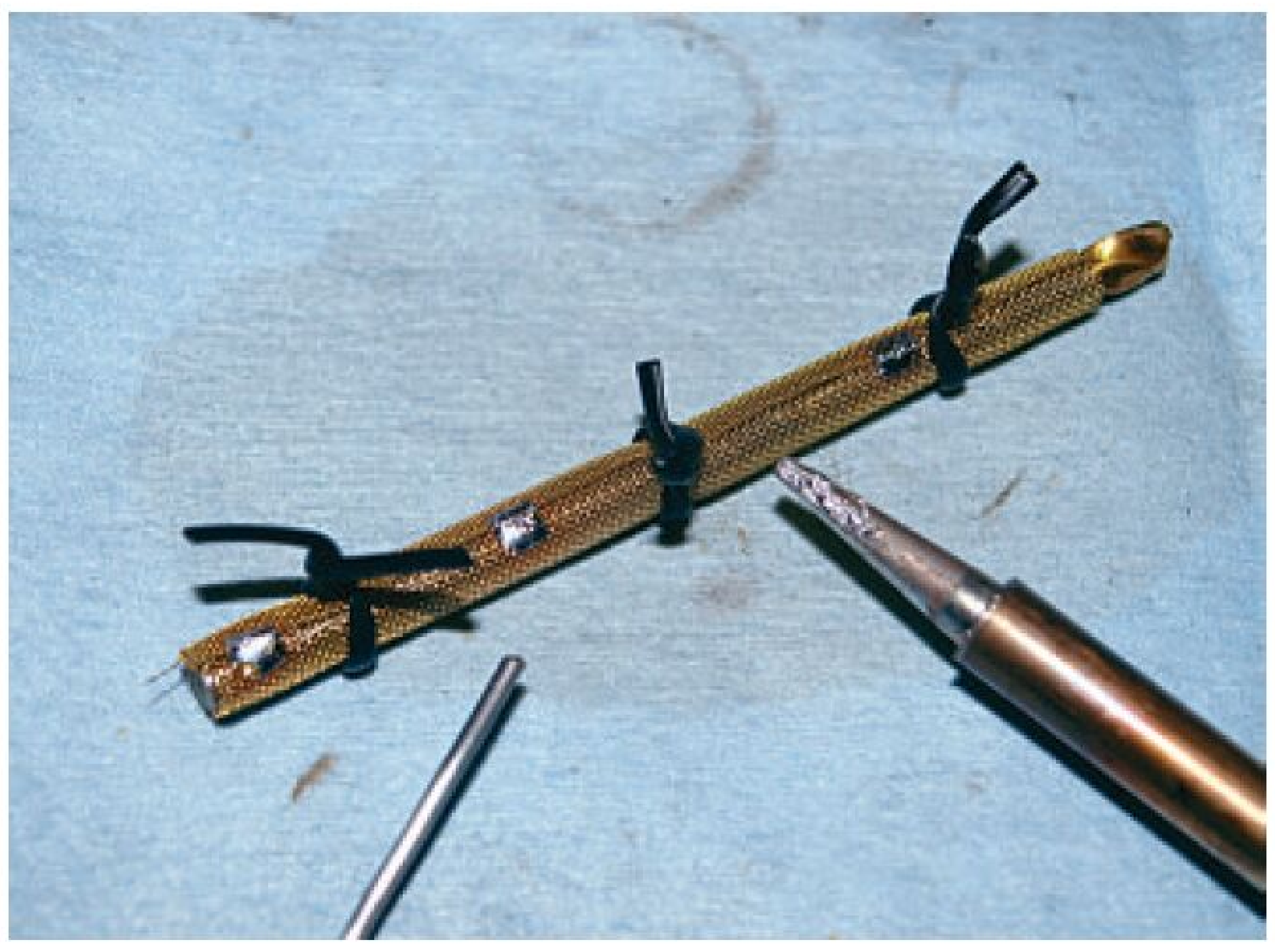


A little patience with the cordless drill and the mount comes out. There's no obvious bonding mechanism other than the interference fit so the torque of the drill normally spins the brass tube out easily.

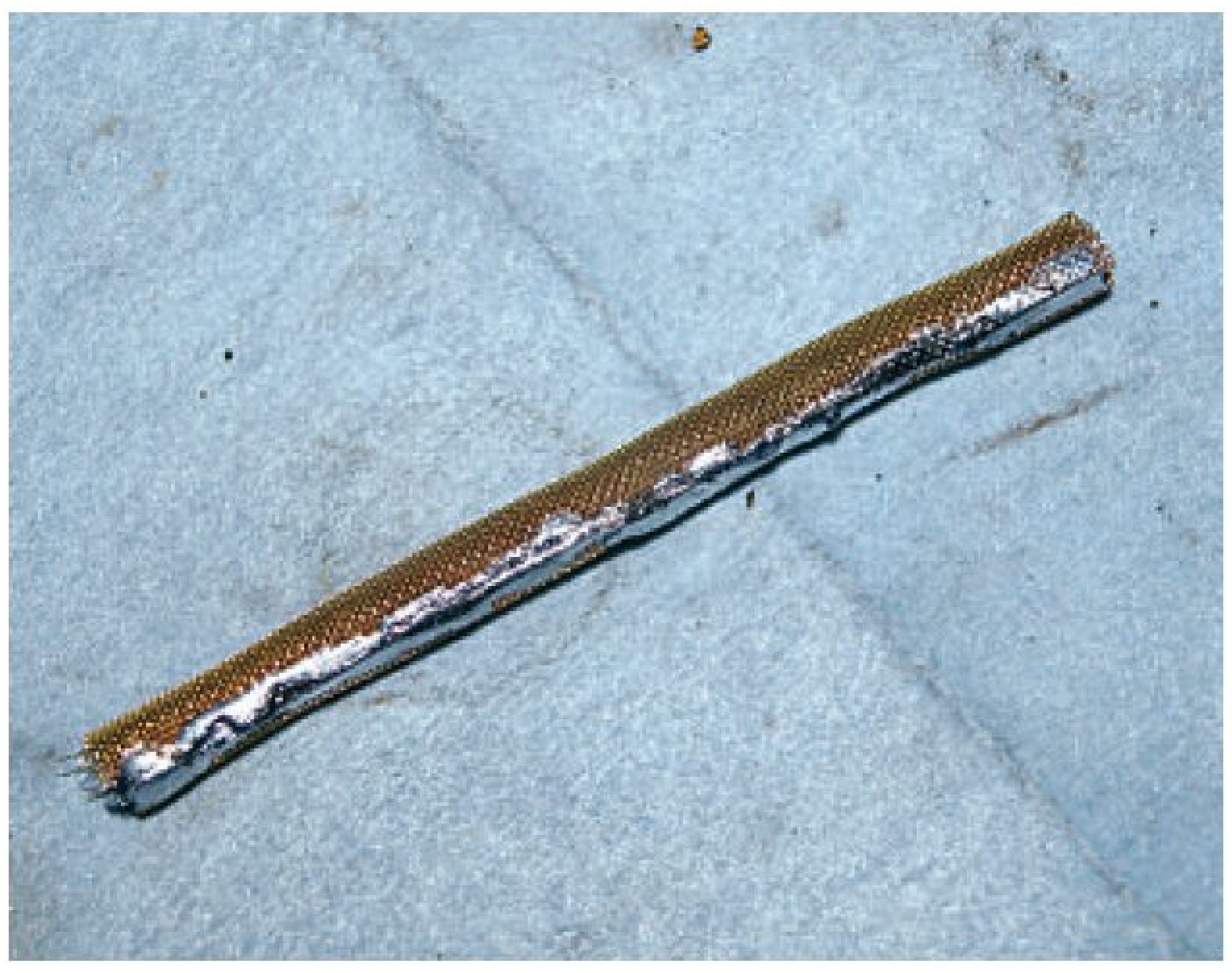
Sourced via the ubiquitous eBay, a sheet of brass mesh is just a couple of quid. It's worth taking the time to ensure it's the right specification of mesh size.



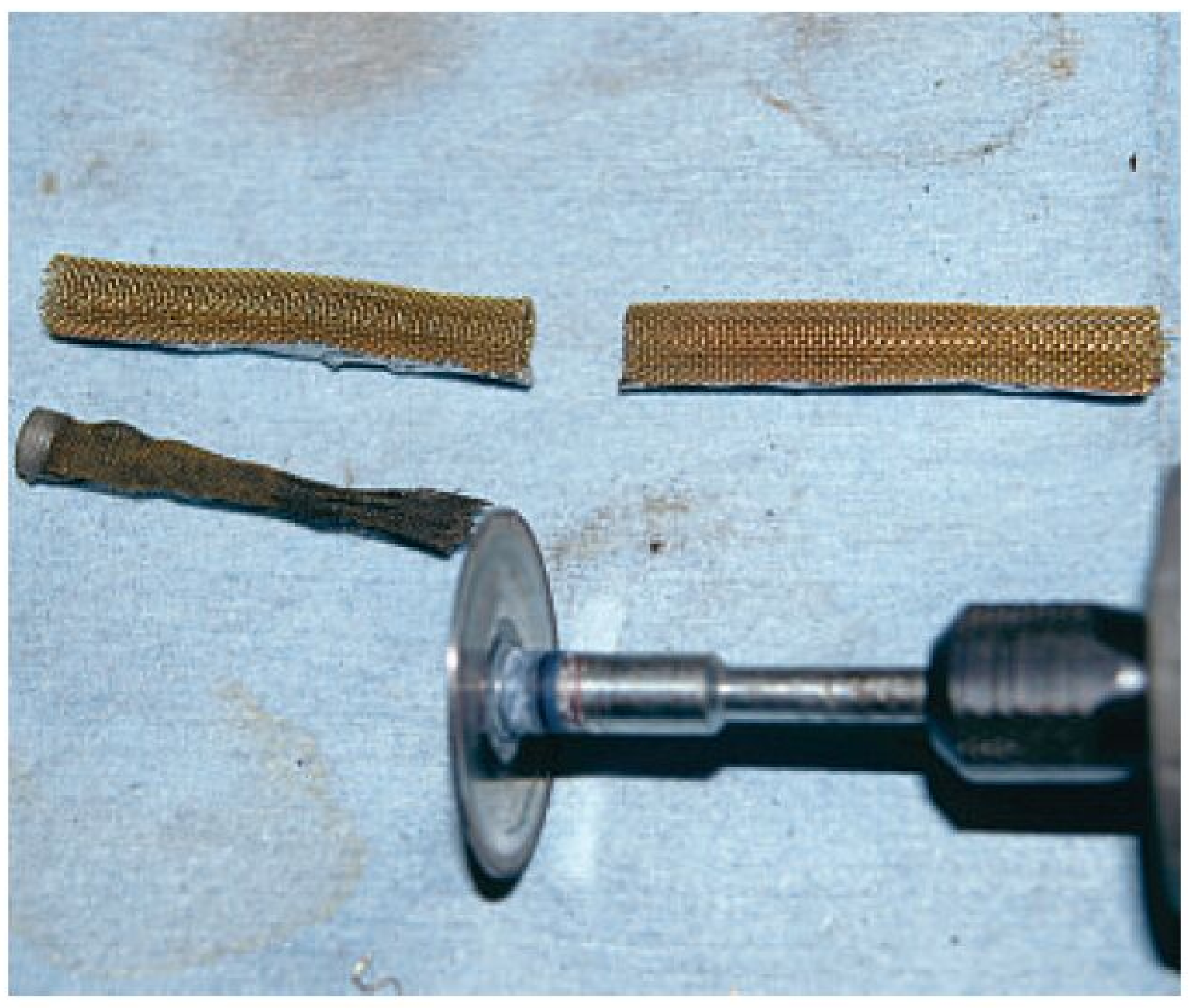
Using a suitably-sized twist drill as a mandrel, a section of cut brass mesh is worked into a reasonable working diameter that mimics the damaged filter. It gets fiddly at this size, but doable!



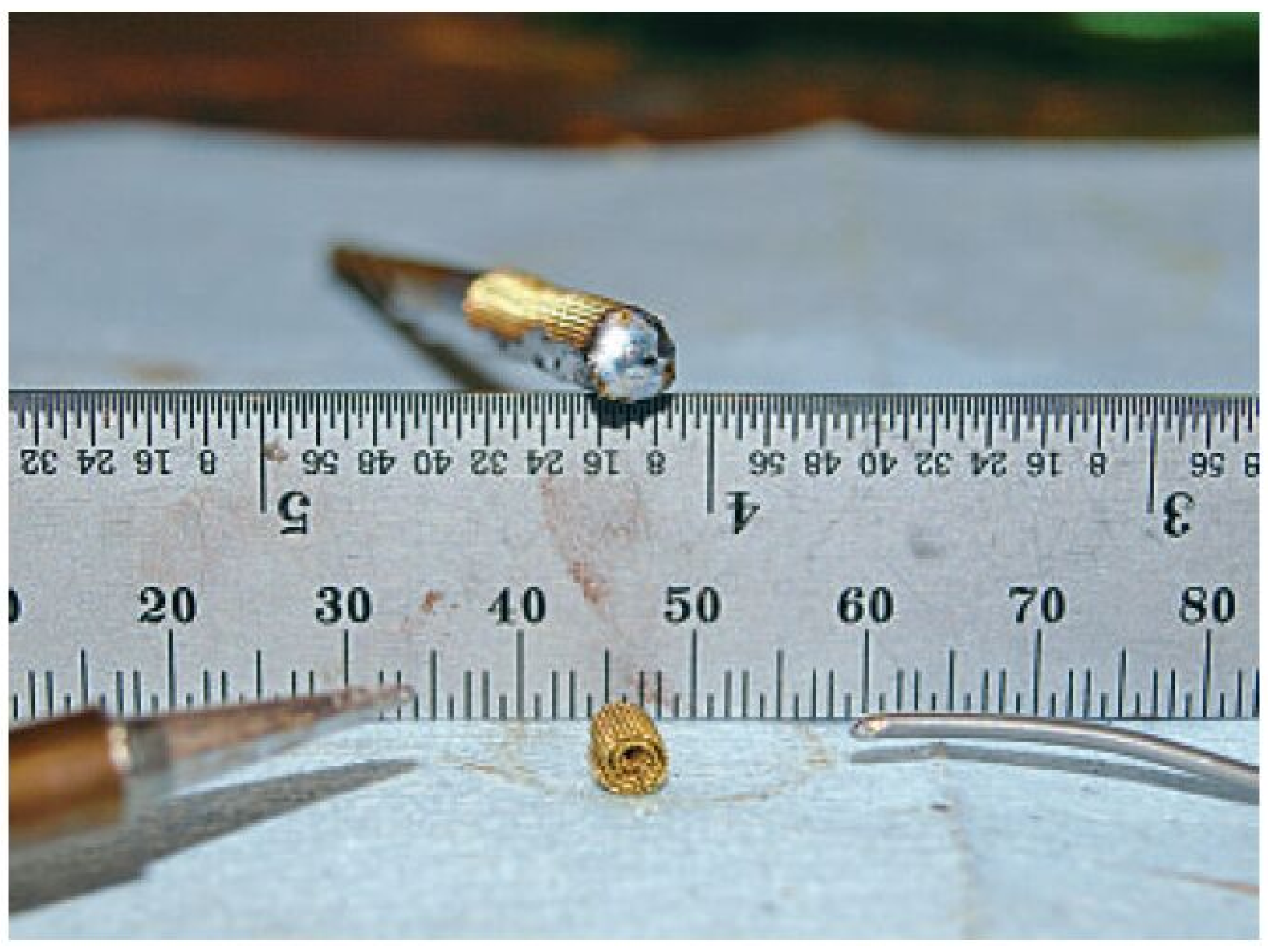
With some twists of garden wire, the mesh is pulled in tight to the drill and some securing dobs of electrical solder is added. Cable ties are tricky to cut off without damaging the mesh.



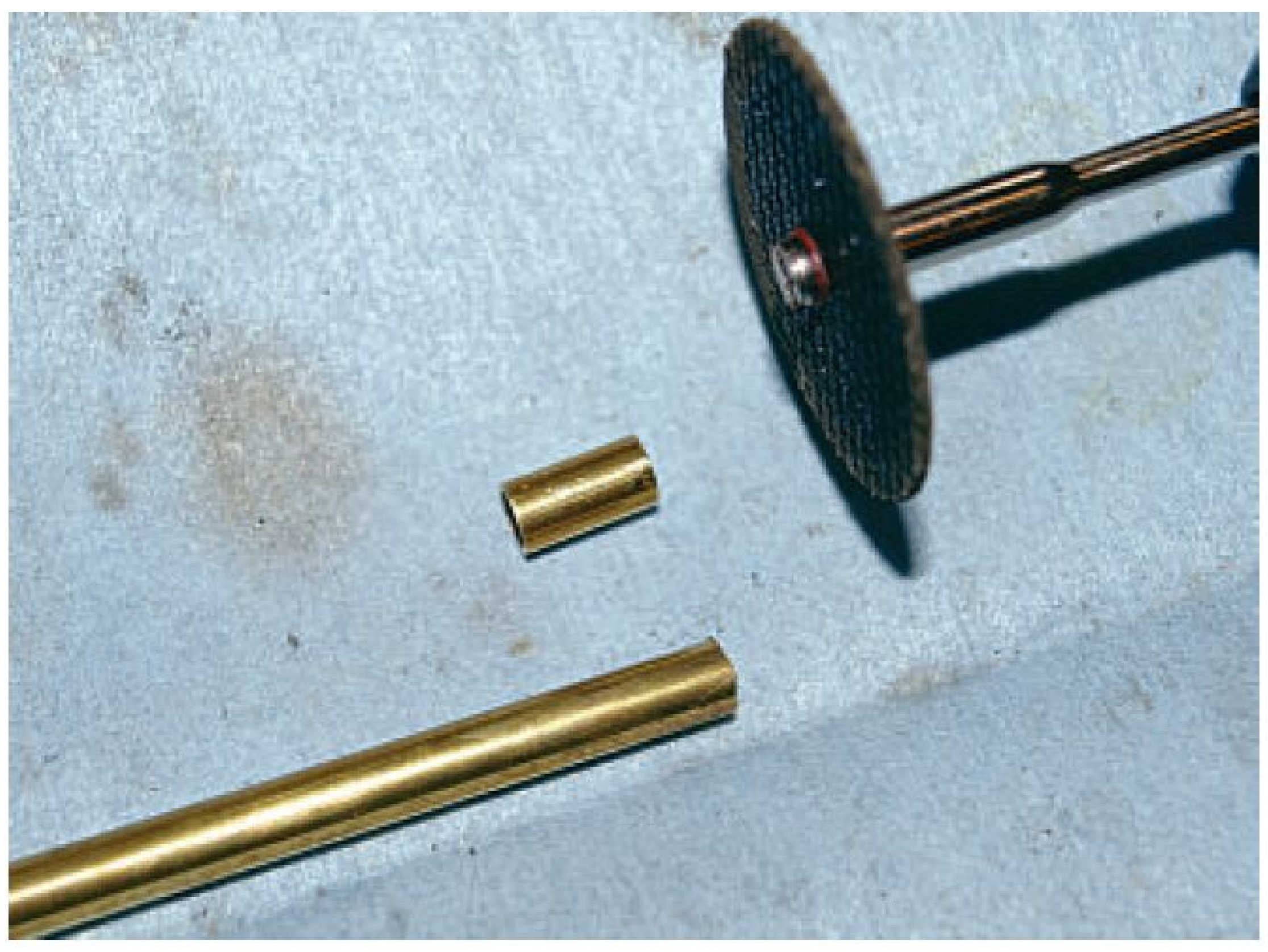
With the twist drill removed, the joint is completed with solder and ready to be cut to size. The excess brass mesh tube will be repurposed shortly.



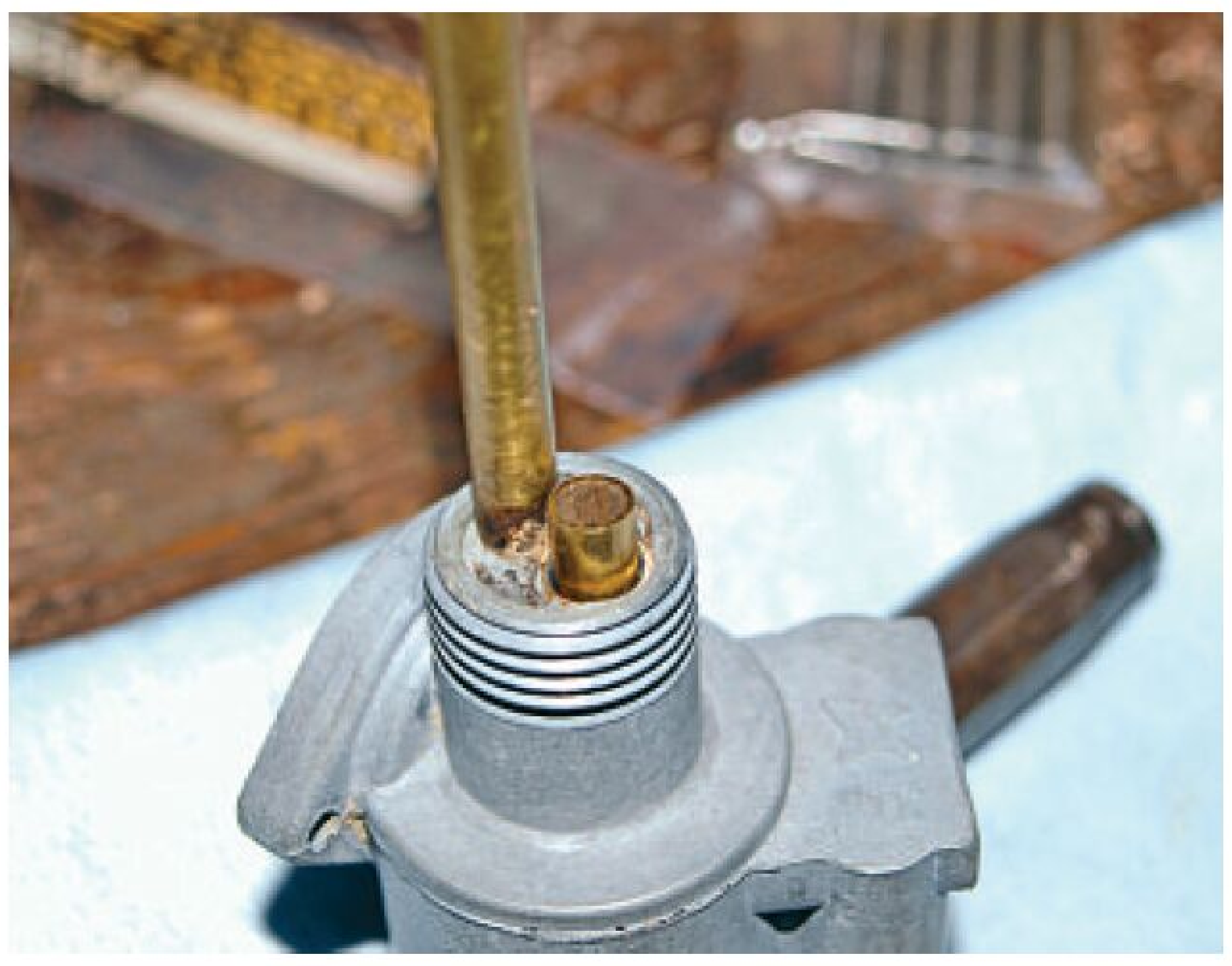
You could cut the brass mesh tube with scissors, but I chose to use a Dremel as it creates less distortion of the shape.



One end needs to be sealed so a small offcut of the mesh is rolled up, inserted and soldered into place, like a cork. Remember, the height dictates how early you switch to reserve.

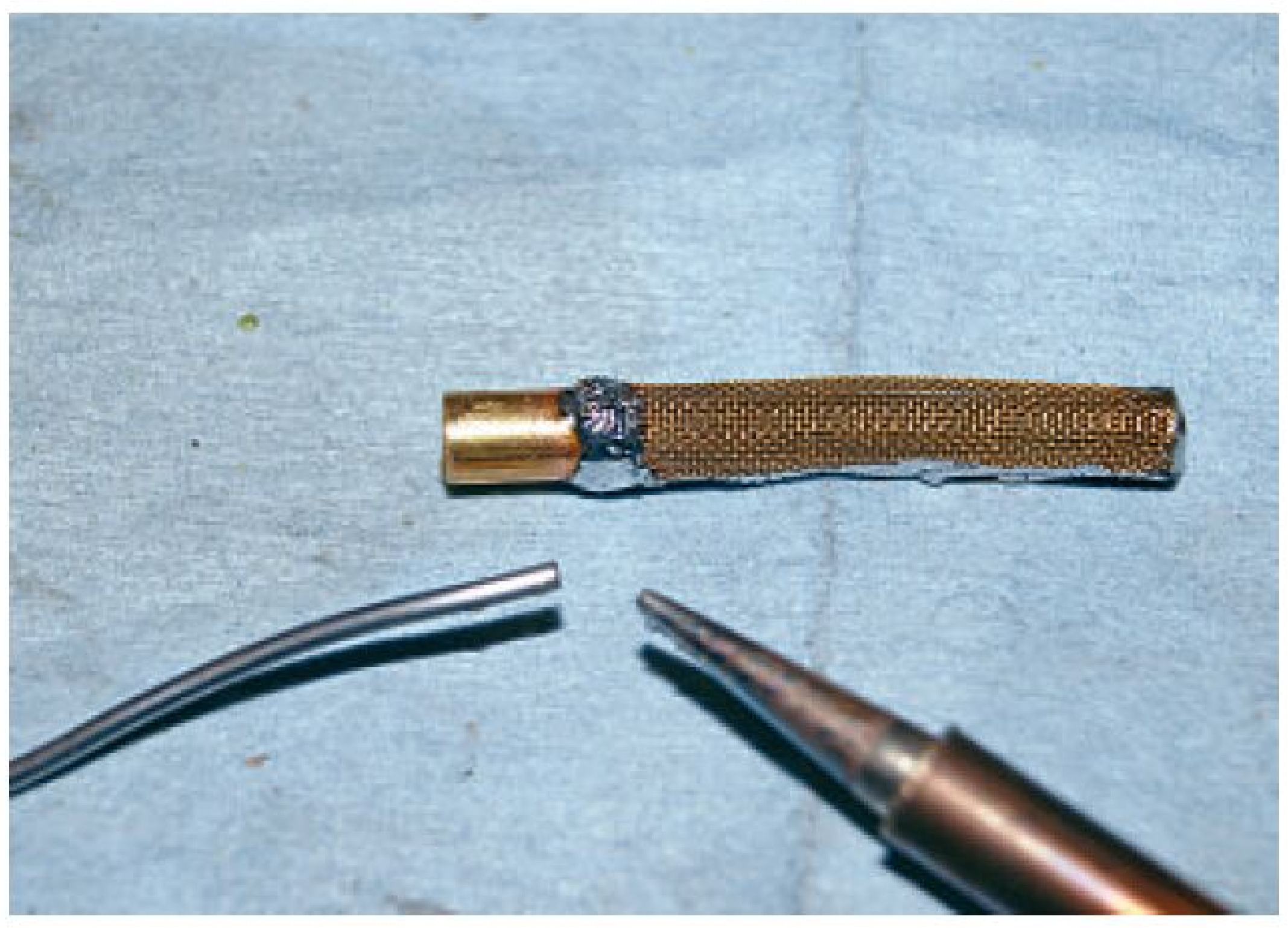


Again, eBay sourced, a length of brass tube which will form the new mount to go into the tap body. Metric is easy to locate; imperial may need gluing if part is too small or filing if too large.

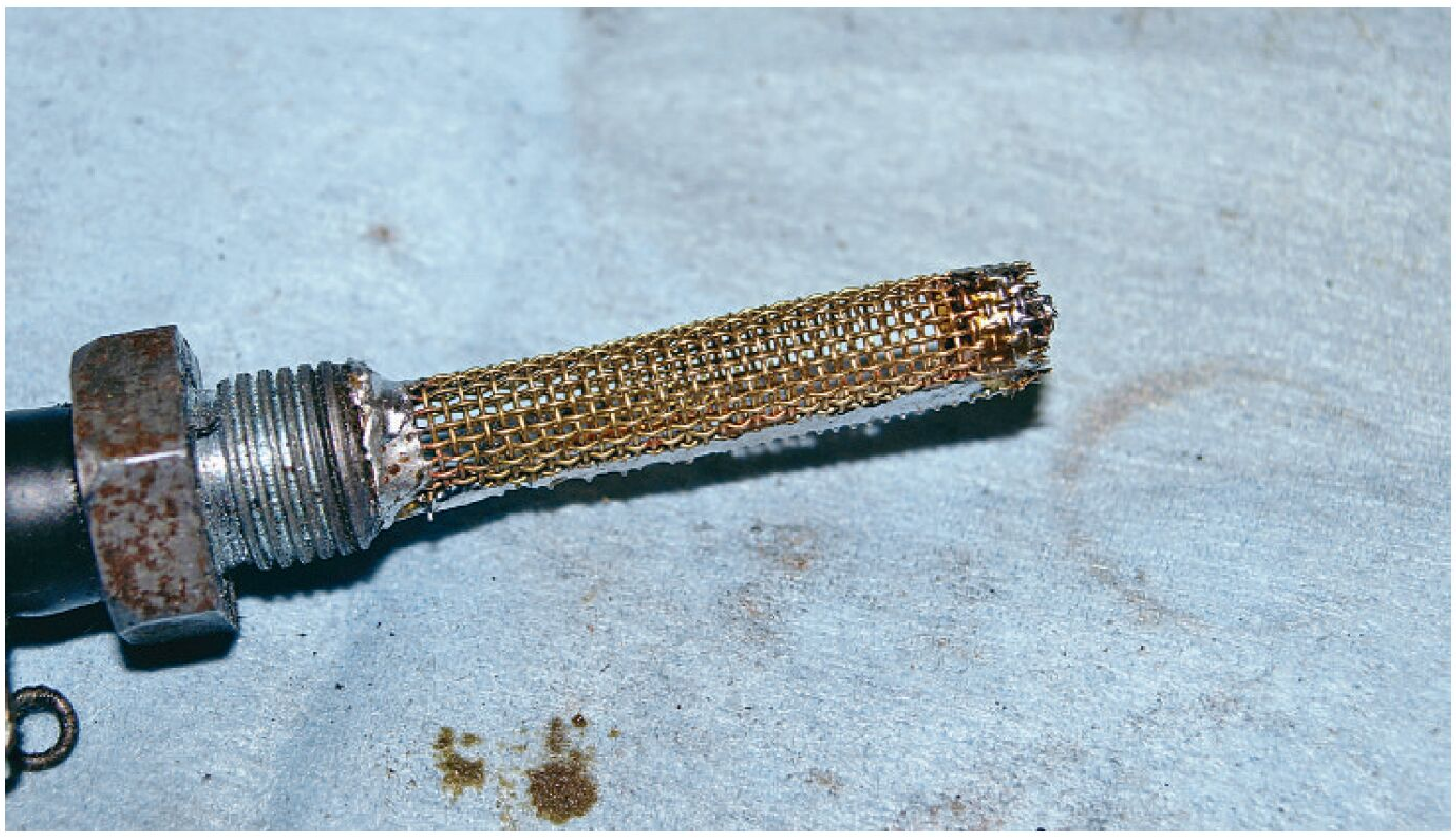


A quick sanity check to see everything fits properly. The annulus around the brass tube is exactly what we need for the final assembly so the adhesive can do its job.

Obviously, if you're going this deep into a tap, you'd be well advised to clean out all the passageways and possibly invest in new seals and/or fibre washers as appropriate. A year on the repaired tap is working fine and showing no reaction to petrol or fuel stabilisers, so a fine result from a morning's work. Any leftover brass tube is ideal for replacing damaged, corroded or broken main feed pipes. Of course, you could potentially buy a pattern tap but availability for the older Japanese bikes can be flaky. And sadly, some of the pattern stuff is frankly not fit for purpose, so renovating what you have is probably the better option. And the satisfaction is priceless! **CBG**



Final soldering task has the tube and mesh married together.



Remember that piece of brass mesh tube left over? That's now earning its keep at the bottom of the oil tank, keeping rubbish out of the Autolube pump.

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Can't recommend this stuff enough! Supa Fix bonds the mount in place and doesn't let go; it's more than happy sitting in petrol. Other fuel-resistant adhesives are available, though.

Inline fuel filters

There's absolutely nothing wrong with inline fuel filters providing they do decent job and you can find somewhere to fit them. It's only when you try to install one that you appreciate just how little space is actually available. If everything is cramped around the carbs, it's sometime possible to locate filters under them, above them, or even behind them near the airbox; you'll just need longer lengths of fuel hose. As long as there's sufficient fuel in the tank, gravity will ensure the petrol delivered where it needs to go. Obvious but easily overlooked - plastic filters need to be petrol-proof, and don't bend the inlet/outlet or they'll crack; if the mesh inside is coarse, it'll do nothing significant; and metal ones tend to vibrate around unless fixed in place. Personal preference? I tend to go for the clear plastic type with the fluted yellow filter paper inside. That way, I can see what's going on and when they need replacing. And one final thought – make sure the filter(s) you buy are the correct size for the fuel pipe you're using. Just don't ask me how I know, okay?

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Who do they think they are?

Frank Westworth is the editor of RealClassic magazine, the latest in a long series of publications that began in 1982 when he was bullied into producing *The Jampot*, the previously excellent magazine of the AJS & Matchless OC. He was also founding editor of *Classic Bike Guide* and has returned as a columnist as a penance. Or something. He has a mysterious obsession with riding obscure and elderly motorcycles, which he does very slowly...

Frank's Famous Last Words

The old bike market is falling, we're told. But what does it all mean?

YOU WILL BE AT LEAST AS AWARE AS I am of the currently somewhat subdued state of the old bike sales scene. Tales of gloom, doom, and despondency abound – in fact, I've just sold a couple of bikes myself, taking quite a hit on one of them, a result which did not entirely fill me with joy unbounded. But hey, it's a loss on an old motorcycle, not the end of the world. Call it depreciation instead and it sounds less uncomfortable. Who buys old bikes as investments anyway? Answers on a used tenner to our editor.

I've been chatting with chums about this, and we are just about in agreement that if a market declines, there should be bargains galore – opportunities for skinflints like me to finally afford those previously unattainable wonderbikes which we've always wanted. Do you feel the same way? Or are you stuck with 40 or so previously priceless investment bikes, genuine DBD34 Goldies, and International Nortons, maybe? Vincent twins and Rudge Ulsters? Brough Superiors and Venom Thruxtons? I was going to suggest Honda CB750 sandcasters but just went to check their prices. I'll stay quiet about those – and indeed a surprising number of other Japanese rarities from the 1960s and 1970s.

Gazing around the somewhat depleted contents of The Shed reveals that there's only a single 'investment grade' motorcycle left – a Triumph which is really an orange BSA, and that belongs to the Better Third, so is non-negotiable. What am I saying? A mostly empty Shed? Surely the time has come to flex the family wallet and bag some bargains. Whoopee, as we might say. Or might not, depending on many things. Such as, do we remind ourselves of our dream bikes and go hunting for them? Do we simply look at every available ad for suddenly affordable treasures? Or do we adopt the lazy man approach, waiting for bikes to be offered by chums who for some unfathomable reason no longer want to own their particular dream bike any longer? You know that immaculate Hesketh which has never run properly and which is somehow taller and heavier than it used to be?

As you may remember, in a typical month I'll probably ride a half-dozen different machines, so the temptation to buy one should be overwhelming, no?

No. In fact it's the reverse. We might both be surprised by how often I find myself aboard a bike I've always fancied... until I rode it. Let's take my own personal favourite: Norton's excellent Mk. 3 Commando. I sold my last one, a fine Interstate, to a friend who wanted to buy it. Do I regret it? Yes. But not for the reasons you might expect. I regret it because it confirmed that somehow or other Norton Commandos have grown bigger and heavier than they were when I was in my 20s and 30s and even 40s and rattled far and wide with them. I wonder how that can be.

But I still really fancy another. And I was offered one, a sparkly blue Roadster, shiny but not too shiny, original except for the endless improvements and – I told myself – much easier to handle than the last Interstate. If I bought this Commando at the current slightly lower price I would ride it everywhere, every day and the sun would always shine down on the empty winding roads ahead.

Which is nonsense. It was heavy, and it was high, and the clutch played heck with my feeble fingers, so I didn't buy it.

I find myself wondering whether prices will change back to the way they were 10, 15 years ago, when a decent but unremarkable 350 or 500 Brit wasn't somehow so valuable that many proud owners hardly rode them so they could maintain that supposed value? Whether cooking Beezer twins and oily-frame Triumphs would return to the way they were when we used them for commuting and fun outings in all weathers and washed them maybe once a month unless it was raining?

What my current ad scouring exercise has also revealed is that the prices of 'project' bikes, particularly those returnees from US dry states, rust-free and basically complete non-runners, have hardly fallen at all. Why is this? It is now really impossible to rebuild machines from any of the Big Three marques and sell them at a price to cover the parts cost. But still, they sell well as projects. Why?

Is it possible that old bike fans now all ride Royal Enfields and regard old bike projects as some kind of big jigsaw puzzle with which to while away those wintry weekends?

Blowed if I know... CBG

> *"Do you feel the same way? Or are you stuck with 40 or so previously priceless investment bikes, genuine DBD34 Goldies, and International Nortons, maybe?"*

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